**Locating Leadership Success in Political Time:**

**Analysing Presidents and Prime Ministers in Historical Context**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of the Australian National University

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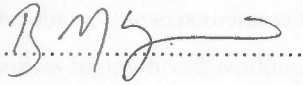
Declaration of authorship:

**Except where otherwise indicated,**

**this thesis is my own work.**



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## A Note for Reading this Thesis

This thesis by publication follows the standard practice for theses of this format. It is one coherent project but the body section is composed of four peer-reviewed articles. Each of the articles underwent extensive workshop sessions before being sent for publication and each has been improved by responses to reviewer comments. As each article was also written for publication in its own right, this means that some points are repeated. In particular, the theory that informs the thesis as a whole is introduced within each article. The first article, 'The Politics Prime Ministers Make' is co-authored with Matthew Laing. The work for this article, from its conception to its completion, was conducted equally by Matthew and me, his name appears first purely for alphabetical reasons.

The articles have not been amended for their presentation in this thesis except that they have been reformatted to provide uniform appearance and referencing for readers' convenience. As the articles themselves stand alone, the introduction and conclusion have a larger role than these sections of an unpublished thesis would. It is these two sections that explain how the peer-reviewed articles fit together to form the overall thesis. Thus, the introduction includes a section that summarises the articles and explains their contribution to the broader argument. The articles provide the material from which a historical contextual framework for analysing the success of political leaders is drawn. The conclusion brings the findings of the various articles together to provide a full expression of the framework.

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**Abstract**

This thesis makes a theoretical contribution to the analysis of successful political leadership. It argues that we should judge leaders operating in different historical contexts by different criteria. Historical context shapes the opportunities leaders have to achieve their goals, enabling some leaders to achieve more than others. Furthermore, in different historical contexts society demands different types of leadership. Therefore, taking account of historical context allows us to make a fair comparison of leaders when assessing their success and it allows us to encourage leaders to behave in ways that provide better results for their nations.

The thesis derives its understanding of the relationship between historical context and political leadership from Stephen Skowronek's conceptualisation of the US Presidency and his four leadership types. It demonstrates that Skowronek's theory operates in Australia and other so-called Westminster countries. In particular, political time operates where the executive leader is the most creative agent of change within the political system, and where competing conservative and progressive political actors contest to control the direction of political change.

Regardless of their political system, leaders are always in a contest with opponents and the interaction between these leaders and their oppositions is vital to their eventual success or failure. The thesis shows that oppositions can encourage the success of political leaders, sometimes unintentionally, sometimes in a positive and deliberate manner through engaging with leaders' ideas. The relationship between political leaders and oppositions can be

complex but it must be examined closely in order to understand leaders' success or failure.

The second half of the thesis focuses heavily on how political leaders can succeed and it creates four separate frameworks for analysing presidents and prime ministers. These frameworks take account of both material and interpretive realms of success. Naturally, leaders' concrete achievements are important but so is their interpretive success, in which they convince publics and political elites that their actions are successes and that they are successes as a result of leaders' actions. Political leaders' success comes in three forms: personal success, partisan regime success and normative success and these form the basis of the four frameworks of political success. The three forms of success are available to Skowronek's four leadership types to differing degrees and so the four leadership types are examined according to different criteria.

The most important form of success is partisan regime success, as success of this form allows leaders' achievements to endure. Partisan regime success is the form that alters most among the different leadership types. The conclusion also examines the thesis' implications for how we understand political leadership and how we understand the broader operation of democratic politics. It argues that once we examine them in context, more leaders have been successful than is commonly supposed. Political leadership studies must pay more attention to historical context and come to understand leadership in relationship to the full range of social and political forces that act upon it.

# Introduction

## Contextualising Political Leadership Success

Prime ministers and presidents provide crucial leadership of their governments, parties, administrations and nations. They provide the public face of their nations when they travel abroad and the public face of their parties at elections. They are the individuals that publics hold most accountable for the actions of their governments. Although political leaders' actions are constrained by institutions and other political actors, they are the most authoritative and powerful single figures within governments. It is hard to imagine modern democracy existing without leaders, in some way chosen by and accountable to the people. As Kane and Patapan state, 'Good leadership is essential for a well-functioning democracy' (2012: 1). But how well do we understand what "good" leadership is?

Modern democracies constrain leaders with various institutional checks and balances because of suspicions they will misuse power. Yet these institutions cannot actually force leaders to represent their constituencies at all, let alone well (Urbinati 2006: 36). Constitutional designs assume the worst of political leaders and constrain them, but this only makes it more difficult for leaders to meet public expectations. Barack Obama has recently been re-elected as US President despite strong public sentiment that he had not fulfilled the promise of hope and change that swept him to power in the 2008 election (see Jacobson 2011). This story of unfulfilled promise is common.

Public cynicism about politicians at all levels suggests that good leadership is rare (see Stoker 2006, Hay 2007). But do our national leaders deserve the low opinions so often bestowed on them? Paradoxically, despite cynicism about

whether politicians and political leaders have their interests at heart, publics and scholarly observers tend to celebrate strong leaders with great achievements who change the political landscape (see for example Landy and Milkis 2000: 2). But are they right to do so? Is it always best to make major changes to the nation? Is it even possible in all situations? Public expectations are important in determining leaders' actions. Leaders wish to be seen as successful, so public expectations about the type of leadership they should provide influence their behaviour.

Political leaders also often model themselves on past leaders with reputations for success. Current Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard has in some respects modelled her leadership on that of Bob Hawke, calling him 'the benchmark for the prime ministership' and 'a role model' (Sydney Morning Herald 2010). Similarly, US President Lyndon Johnson sought to match, or even surpass, Franklin Roosevelt (Dallek 1991: 6). Hawke and Roosevelt are among those who made major changes and left enduring legacies. These comparisons and public demands encourage leaders to act in ways that were appropriate for the historical context of Roosevelt or Hawke but not necessarily appropriate for that of Johnson or Gillard. Clarifying the criteria of political leadership success with respect to historical context is essential as it can encourage better political leadership and it enables scholars to better understand the varied challenges of political leadership.

The study of leaders, as opposed to leadership events such as presidential elections, parliamentary addresses or legislative successes, has not seen the advances evident in other areas of political study. This field has long been lamented as theoretically underdeveloped, a problem which exists partly because of political leadership's existence outside mainstream political science (Peele 2005, Hartley and Benington 2011). It has been largely neglected by those who employ quantitative research methods, as leaders are perennially

subjects of too small a sample size. However, leaders do not easily lend themselves to other forms of observation either. They are elusive because they seek to exhibit only positive behaviours in public performances and they are universally secretive about their decision-making processes (Hart 1998, Bowles 1999). Many of the shortcomings of existing work on leadership success result from the relative scarcity of political leadership success studies. Existing studies of political leadership success have often been simplistic, particularly in lacking a systematic approach to historical context.

This introduction describes the aim of the thesis, as well as four major areas in which the thesis contributes to our understanding of political leadership success. The importance of these areas is highlighted in the second section, which reviews the literature on political leadership success, detailing why it is difficult to study and the common ways of understanding the concept. In addition, it reviews the emerging field of historical-contextual leadership studies. Although this field currently pays little attention to political leadership success itself, it provides a way to examine success with greater attention to historical context. The literature review also contains a discussion of the potential difficulties of using the historical-contextual approach. Finally, the introduction presents summaries of each of the peer-reviewed articles that make up the body of the thesis.

**Aim and focus.**

This thesis seeks to make a theoretical contribution to the study of political leadership by developing an approach to analysing leadership success for presidents and prime ministers, with leaders' historical contexts as its foundation. In doing this it builds upon, reapplies and augments Stephen Skowronek's work on the American presidency (see especially 1986, 1997, 2008), which defines four leadership types based on leaders' historical

contexts. The thesis creates an original historical-contextual framework for analysing success for each of these four types of president. It adopts an approach in which historical context is defined by a cyclical pattern. Thus analysing leaders in their historical contexts allows us to examine multiple leaders from various eras who shared similar constraints on their authority. Such examination suggests that a greater number of leaders have succeeded than is presently acknowledged in studies that take insufficient account of historical context, suggesting that historical context is crucial to a broader understanding of political leadership.

While the thesis' focus is theoretical, there are many empirical examples included within but these are chiefly used to illustrate and inform theoretical points. The purpose of this thesis is to advance our theoretical understanding of leadership success rather than our empirical knowledge, and thus the empirical research largely relies on secondary political and historical material.

In developing an original conceptualisation of leadership success, the thesis furthers scholarly understanding of political leadership in four main areas. First and most important is historical context. Too many attempts to analyse leadership either ignore or under-examine the historical context in which leaders operate. This thesis argues that success is possible for all leaders, but that the definition of success differs depending on the historical context leaders occupy. Success should not be equated with contextually derived advantage. Understanding success differently in different contexts is important, not just because leaders have varying opportunities depending upon their historical context, but also because different contexts imply different societal demands. Thus it benefits society and is in leaders' interests that leaders act in different ways at different times.

Our conceptualisation of context needs to be complex enough to acknowledge that context can alter in response to leaders' actions. For leaders to achieve success in their context they must capitalise on the opportunities their situation provides. However, it also requires that leaders enhance their capacity and authority to act by structuring situations to their advantage (see Riker 1986, Heffernan 2003, Bevir and Rhodes 2006, 't Hart 2012).

The second area in which this thesis advances our knowledge of political leadership success is the relationship between government leaders and their oppositions. Leaders always have opponents and are always in contests. The actions of these opponents are a significant part of any explanation of government leaders' success. The institutional and constitutional environments of different countries mean that those opponents have varying resources and power to use against a leader. Where legislative and executive powers are separate, as in the US, opposition is diffuse and can struggle to consistently compete with the leader's legitimacy (Polsby 1997: 517-518). In majoritarian parliamentary systems, a permanent opposition has little chance of directly influencing policy (Kaiser 2008, Uhr 2009), but it gains legitimacy from its status as an alternative government (Helms 2004: 27, Maddox 2005: 237). This allows a greater sense of authority as opposition leaders have some ability to speak for the nation as alternative leaders. In consensus systems, opposition parties frequently also have the legislative ability to alter or halt leaders' actions (Helms 2004: 30-34).

Within each of these systems, oppositions can be stronger and weaker. Their relative strength is partly related to the perceived performance of the government and its leader, but the reverse is also true. Some leaders are unfortunate enough to take office at a time when the opposition is united and ascendant, while others face weak oppositions, which are consumed with infighting and lack of direction. The contest between government leaders and

oppositions becomes in part a contest to frame the public understanding of events (see McCaffrie 2009) and thus becomes a contest over public perceptions of leaders and their actions as successes or failures. Furthermore, oppositions can and do make positive contributions to the success of political leaders, particularly through their engagement with and acceptance of certain policies.

The third major area in which this thesis seeks to develop our understanding is in how cross-national political leadership studies are conceptualised. Calls for more cross-national comparisons in executive leadership studies are plentiful but such studies are too rarely conducted (but see Helms 2005, Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997, Weller 1985). Many problems political leaders face are not nation specific, but result from the nature of executive leadership in a modern representative democracy (Kane and Patapan 2012, Skowronek 1995). Consequently, it is not always necessary to separate the study of political leadership by nation or political system. Naturally, cross-national leadership studies should be sensitive to the intricacies of different political systems, but there is much to be gained by judiciously applying the theoretical advances of one country to the empirical examples of others. In particular, much of the academic work on political leadership focuses on the American presidency, but many of the advances in the understanding of the presidency can also apply to other executive political leaders (see Johansson 2009, Theakston 2011). Furthermore, applying a theory to different empirical material allows us to improve our understanding of the original theory and make adjustments and improvements to it.

Throughout this thesis examples are taken from Australia, the US and, to a lesser extent, the UK. Skowronek's presidential theory is more usefully applied to majoritarian than to consensus systems. Even in reapplying Skowronek's theory to majoritarian systems, there is a need for some

adjustment to account for different institutional realities. However, the thesis argues that there are many similar historical-contextual forces acting upon both US presidents and so-called Westminster prime ministers, which justify reapplication of the theory.

The fourth area in which the thesis extends our knowledge is its development of a stronger understanding of what success means in political leadership. Even those who study leadership success rarely subject the concept to in-depth investigation (see 't Hart 2011). The way success is conceptualised develops throughout the thesis. Initially, it applies the most typical view of success from the literature, one based on achieving major change and leaving a lasting legacy. As the thesis progresses, its concept of success develops to acknowledge that success is different for leaders in different contexts and to conceptualise success with greater complexity than most existing studies.

McConnell's work on policy success provides a basis for the study of political leadership success (2010). McConnell argues that both the foundationalist and the anti-foundationalist versions of success are important. Foundationalist arguments hold that success is objective and verifiable against measurable standards. There are material goals in policy and these are either met or not met. The anti-foundationalist perspective maintains that there are no objective standards of success, and that success is purely a matter of individual interpretation (McConnell 2010: 30-31). McConnell shows that both of these elements are essential. As political leaders are both actors and spokespeople for their actions, they are largely responsible for both the material and the interpretive elements of their own success.

Political leadership success has three forms: personal success, partisan regime success and normative success. These are discussed in detail in the fourth article of the thesis. The availability of these types of success varies for leaders

in different historical contexts, primarily because access to the interpretive elements of success differs across these three forms. This knowledge informs the four historical contextual frameworks of leadership success that are presented in the conclusion of the thesis.

Naturally, there are limitations in the scope of the thesis. As acknowledged above, the thesis is largely theoretical and does not present a detailed new empirical study. In part, the lack of new empirical investigation results from the space limitations of the thesis-by-publication format. However, it also reflects the fact that the field of political leadership studies is in greater need of theoretical advancement than it is in need of new empirical material.

The format of the thesis also limits its capacity to explore certain arguments to their absolute conclusion. For example, the examination of oppositions' contributions to leadership success is approached in terms of one type of leadership, rather than all types. This reflects the trade-off that this thesis format allows. The advantage is that this thesis is able to explore a broader range of phenomena, even if it does so in slightly less detail. This balance suits this particular thesis, as it allows broader extension of theoretical boundaries than a more narrowly focused study would.

## Literature Review

There are multiple ways to understand political leadership. For some scholars, few politicians can truly display leadership even if they are in official positions of authority (see Burns 2003: 27-29), while for others, all politics *is* leadership (Tucker 1981). On the one hand, leadership is limited to those who possess higher virtues and is therefore difficult to find, on the other it is so broad that it is difficult to distinguish from other political phenomena (see Buller and

James 2012: 539). Throughout this thesis, "political leadership" refers to *the* executive political leader; in the examples presented here this means the president or the prime minister. The restrictiveness of this conception is partly imposed by Skowronek's theory. It is also a necessary, pragmatic limit that prevents the thesis from investigating inherently different types of leadership. The leadership of ministers cannot be understood in the same way as that of prime ministers, unless the focus is only on the range of activities that both types of leader performs and not those that are intrinsic to either role.

The term "political leadership" is equated with the institutions of prime minister and president here, purely as a convenient term that covers both institutions. This does not mean that political leadership should be defined exclusively as that which comprises these two institutions. While a definition of political leadership must take account of many factors, the one provided here aims for simplicity. Burns argues that leadership must be moral, or it is not leadership (1978). However, it is best to avoid including normative judgments in such a definition, in particular because the definition must include the possibility of bad leadership, both in terms of ethics and in terms of quality, which can still be defined as leadership. Other definitions often include the need to create change as essential for a definition of leadership (Rost 1991). Such a requirement is ideologically charged, and ignores the fact that in some instances, the exercise of leadership involves preserving good elements of society rather than changing them.

Political leadership should be defined as a process, in which leaders engage in a series of relationships with their multiple and separate constituencies of followers (see Burns 2003: 170-172). These relationships are unequal. Leaders have greater powers than their followers, however followers, in various parts of the polity or political system, can grant or withhold the authority to exercise those powers. In this way, these relationships involve leaders' dependence

upon followers as well as their power over them. Naturally, this definition allows political leadership to occur beyond the institutions of president and prime minister, which are the focus of this thesis.

**The Difficulties of Studying Political Leadership Success**

The reasons for studying success in executive political leadership may seem obvious. The importance of political leaders makes it undeniably worth improving our understanding of them. Furthermore, assessment of leaders' performance is a means of encouraging their accountability. Leaders wish to be judged as successful and therefore adjust their behaviour in an effort to achieve this. Leaders' desire for success suggests that an unsophisticated view of this concept, particularly one based on perpetuating major change, may encourage leaders to take actions with negative consequences for society. More realistic criteria for judging leadership success can therefore encourage better political outcomes.

Consequently, the dearth of direct studies of successful executive leadership is surprising. As Paul 't Hart notes, this neglect is partly because success is difficult to define and measure (2011: 324). This difficulty afflicts all political leadership studies. The limited number of cases means political leadership is difficult to study with quantitative research methods, which represent mainstream political science research, especially in America (Bowles 1999: 3). However, leadership success is not just difficult to quantify, but also difficult to define for use in more interpretive studies. Success is usually associated with positive outcomes, but this is too simplistic given that even single policies can create both positive and negative results (McConnell 2010: 27-28). For prime ministers and presidents, especially those with lengthy tenures, there are positive and negative outcomes to consider.

The extent to which leaders are responsible for political outcomes is often unclear. Clearly, leaders are often important but many political outcomes are neither determined, nor even influenced, by executive leaders (Ahlquist and Levi 2011: 3, 't Hart 2011: 324). It is difficult to know the extent of leaders' contributions to particular policies, especially given the complexity of modern governance as represented in various conceptions of network governance ('t Hart 2011: 326, Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997, Bell and Hindmoor 2009). This is exacerbated by the complications of understanding the results of policy and the tendency of governments to claim that actions were successful regardless of ambiguous outcomes (Bovens and 't Hart 1996).

Despite, or because of, leaders' near-universal propensity to claim success, it can be difficult for them to convince publics of their successes. Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's experience of the acute phase of the global financial crisis in 2008 and 2009 exemplifies this difficulty. The Australian economy proved more resilient than most developed economies throughout the crisis. The Rudd Government claimed that this was mainly because of its stimulus packages (Kelly 2009). Others emphasised the continuing success of Australia's resources sector and main trading partners. Regardless, with Australia avoiding the worst effects of the financial crisis, Rudd received little credit for his efforts and opponents even criticised the stimulus packages as a waste of money (Taylor and Uren 2010: 153, 206). Ironically, he might have received more credit had the crisis more deeply affected Australia.

The partly subjective nature of success also means that ideology can influence perceptions of success. Observers often judge policies by different criteria that accord with their political priorities. In the US, Obama's federal health care reforms to increase health insurance coverage may be responsible for improved health standards and therefore viewed as a success by some. However, they will likely be viewed as a failure by people who are opposed to

the expansion of federal government powers. Others who vehemently support an increase in federal government health care responsibilities may view the reforms as inadequate and judge them as failures. It is unsurprising that people who agree with leaders have different opinions of them than those who do not. However, this shows that leaders are often assessed in terms of politically contested values, not their performance.

Many general difficulties always present in political leadership studies affect this particular project. Biographical accounts of leaders rely on records of the private actions of leaders, which vary in quantity and quality (Hart 1998: 388-393). Autobiographies and insider accounts of the actions of political leaders play a role in filling gaps in our knowledge, but they are subjective and often serve to justify authors' actions or downplay their part in controversies or failures. Like political scholars, internal observers lack a complete understanding of leaders' actions. This is one of the more telling criticisms of Neustadt's *Presidential Power* (1980), a work which has formed the basis of much of the political science understanding of the presidency in the latter half of the 20th Century, but which some, like Terry Moe considered too personal and informal (2009: 703). Insider accounts can struggle to comprehend the scope of options available to leaders and the broader context of their actions. In particular, the political effects of leaders' actions can be more obvious to insiders than the societal effects for which external observers have clearer perspectives.

Irrespective of the difficulties inherent in understanding successful political leadership, success deserves more attention. Leadership scholars are often willing to give advice to leaders but without defining what success is, the advice lacks valid basis ('t Hart 2011: 324). More broadly, understanding success in leadership is fundamental to understanding leadership itself. As

Ciulla and Forsyth note, 'the question, "What is a leader?" is really the question "What is a good leader?" (2011: 230).

Political leadership success is potentially a fruitful area for cross-national research. All leaders wish to be successful and are often willing to learn from examples of quality political leadership in other countries. This concept driven analysis allows greater focus on the similarities of executive leaders' motivations and actions rather than the emphasis on difference encouraged by constitutional and institutional work. Naturally, comparative institutional accounts of leadership remain important (see Elgie 1995, Helms 2005, Weller 1985, Hargrove 2001, Heffernan 2005, Hart 1992, Bennister 2007). Understanding institutional constraints and opportunities is essential to a complete comprehension of political leaders and how they succeed. However, a focus on institutional differences among leaders in different countries should be placed alongside multinational studies that emphasise the similarities among national democratic leaders.

**How Has Political Leadership Success Been Studied?**

Attempts to define and understand success are unfortunately rare in political leadership studies. The concept of success is important in understanding political leadership but leadership scholars regularly either ignore the need to define it, or choose to work backwards, beginning with leaders who have reputations for "good" "great" or "successful" leadership and studying those leaders to better understand how current leaders can achieve success (see for example Ludwig 2002, Landy and Milkis 2000). This approach tends to equate good reputations with success and does little to help us understand what success actually is. Leader rankings studies which are particularly prevalent in the US but increasingly also present in other democracies, tend to encourage

this method (Schlesinger 1997, Cohen 2003, Theakston and Gill 2006, 2011, Sheppard 1998).

Theoretical and interpretive understandings of political leadership success tend to emphasise changes made by leaders and the legacies they leave (Burns 1978, 2003, Neustadt 1980, Landy and Milkis 2000, Crockett 2002, Hennessy 2000). Again, these factors relate to reputation and these studies focus heavily on the effects leaders have but success is more complex than this. Some scholars invite closer assessment of issues of process, adding concerns such as the ability of leaders to maintain support and to meet ethical standards as well as effectiveness ('t Hart 2011, Uhr 2005, Masciulli, Molachinov and Knight 2009, Ciulla 2004, Helms 2012, Neustadt 1990). Another branch of research focuses on the importance of skills and character traits in succeeding as political leaders (Theakston 2011, Greenstein 2003a, 2009, Simonton 1987, Barber 1992), and the need for skills to match the context in which leaders find themselves (Hargrove 1998, Bell, Hargrove and Theakston 1999, Keohane 2005).

*Rankings*

Leadership rankings studies are the most common approach to distinguishing successful from unsuccessful leaders. Criticism of these is widespread, and many scholars argue that they do not genuinely measure success. Yet they are frequently used as a proxy for leadership success in studies that seek to measure some other aspect of political leadership and they are often discussed as measures of presidential greatness (see for example Simon and Uscinski 2012, Balz 2010, Adler 2003, Curry and Morris 2010). Rankings studies generally ask experts, such as political scientists and historians, to rate the leaders of a nation from best to worst. The criteria are often ill-defined or not defined at all (Ludwig 2002: 274), but as those who conduct them often argue,

the rankings themselves are fairly consistent. That is, particular leaders' rankings are steady, whether good, poor, or middling, over different studies (Cohen 2003: 914-915).

This consistency may reflect the fact that prior rankings establish a reputation for leaders that influences subsequent expert perceptions. Additionally, new research on particular leaders can suggest that previous impressions were inaccurate. Dwight Eisenhower received a series of poor rankings before a wave of revisionist interpretations of his presidency that began in the 1970s revived his reputation. The alternative interpretation of Eisenhower was confirmed by Greenstein's evidence that Eisenhower had been more active behind the scenes than scholars had previously realised (1979, 1994, McAuliffe 1981: 626-627). Eisenhower's rankings have since risen but there may be other political leaders' whose reputations require re-examination of a type that rankings studies themselves cannot provide.

Some leaders are more frequently studied than others. Positive biographical accounts of Ronald Reagan have proliferated, likely aiding his reputation and ratings. In smaller nations, the dearth of research on certain leaders is problematic. Early 20th century Australian and New Zealand prime ministers are less likely to inspire the research required to adequately understand their national contributions. Small countries are also methodologically problematic as they have fewer experts. All countries have some experts with considered opinions on the relative merits of each of their nation's leaders but to obtain a sufficient response rate, rankings studies must also rely on the opinions of those whose expertise is not political leadership. Many experts have uneven knowledge, knowing much about some leaders but little about others.

Regardless of the quantity of researchers and biographical material, rankings do not measure performance. Simonton has accounted for most of the variance

in presidential rankings using six factors that are almost entirely unrelated to performance (serving during wartime, length of tenure, being a war hero, scandal, intellectual brilliance and being assassinated) (1991). This is unsurprising as US presidential rankings typically ask about "greatness" rather than success. This term is more easily related to reputation than to performance. However, if Simonton's six factors have a common element it is that they are likely to affect presidents' reputations for reasons other than performance. In particular, being war heroes or being assassinated likely creates positive emotional responses to leaders but tells us nothing about their achievements as political leaders.

Several authors have noted that some leaders have more opportunities than others to achieve the greatness that would see them achieve high rankings (Nice 1984, Ballard and Suedfeld 1988, Schlesinger 1997, Theakston and Gill 2011). Franklin Roosevelt always rates at or near the top in these exercises, having led through the major challenges of the Great Depression and World War II. Similarly, Abraham Lincoln as president during the Civil War and George Washington as the first president had unusually large opportunities to succeed. While these presidents' challenges were significant, as were their successes in leading through them, leaders during comparatively prosperous and peaceful times have fewer chances to shape society and are less likely to be considered great or successful. The uneven field of comparison led Crockett to contend that there should be different criteria for analysing leaders in different circumstances, a contention this thesis supports and builds upon (2002). The many problems with leadership rankings mean that we should seek other means of understanding success. Rankings should not be entirely ignored as they provide useful approximations of leaders' reputations among experts.

*Change and Legacy*

In theoretical political leadership studies the changes leaders make and the endurance of their legacies, whether explicit or implicit, form the most common criteria of leadership success. Burns' much-used notion of transforming leadership stresses societal change as leaders' highest function (1978, 2003). Similarly, Rockman considers 'significant change' to be an important and natural factor in understanding what leadership is (1984: 20). He places a premium on legacy, given that we understand success retrospectively and therefore informed by the endurance of leaders' effects on their nations (1984: 187-194). Landy and Milkis state that the best presidents 'were great not only because they brought about change but also left a legacy ... that defined an era' (2000: 3).

The same factors are central to Neustadt's understanding of success. He considers four factors, two of which relate to character: sensitivity to the effects of power and ability to cope with pressure, the others being the achievement of leaders' purposes and the legacy left for successors (1980: 147-148). Hargrove also privileged major change leaders, terming them presidents of achievement (1998). His other types are presidents of preparation and presidents of consolidation. Even the terms preparation and consolidation suggest that these leaders are primarily important because of their relationship to presidents of achievement rather than for their own individual contributions.

The bias towards active leaders who leave durable legacies is present both in rankings studies and in more interpretive and theoretical work. The two types of study undoubtedly affect each other as contributors to the theoretical literature are almost certainly participants in the rankings studies and their work likely influences the way other participants judge leaders. Furthermore,

the relationship between the two types of work ensures that the rankings confirm, or appear to confirm, these scholars' conceptualisations of leadership success. It is unsurprising that change and legacy are such dominant themes in the literature. Defining leadership success is challenging; a wide variety of approaches to leadership can succeed and similar approaches can produce very different results. Thus it is tempting to simplify and judge success primarily by the results of leaders' tenures. This may seem fairer and more objective but it downplays the efforts of more conservative leaders who do not seek major change (Lord 2003: 19). Additionally, it ignores leaders' differences of opportunity and the changing requirements of society.

*Recent approaches to successful political leadership*

Two recent studies of successful political leadership emphasise permanent democratic concerns (Helms 2012, 't Hart 2011). Helms examines factors necessary for leaders to be successful given the influence of media in the modern political world, while 't Hart designs a framework for analysing success that applies more broadly to public leadership, not only political leadership. Helms' interest in the media means that one of his three criteria for success is authenticity, which he defines as a concern that leaders' actions be consistent with their beliefs. This is a persistent concern of journalists in modern democracies, and creates particular difficulties for leaders who face legislative environments that require compromise. At the time of writing, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard is troubled by such a situation. She leads a minority government, which is highly unusual in Australian national politics, requiring her to take a more pragmatic approach to legislative aims. This has meant reversing course on particular policies. Most notably, she introduced a tax on business carbon emissions after promising not to do so. This has encouraged criticism of her apparent lack of authenticity, damaged her authority and consequently reduced her effectiveness.

However, authenticity is not always important. The major-change leaders who have been generally considered most successful have been highly pragmatic, abandoning apparently important aims as well as accepting and even taking credit for changes that they had not desired. Franklin Roosevelt's penchant for adopting contradictory policies, such as increasing government spending while attempting to eliminate budget deficits, is a key example (Brinkley 1995: 4-5). The pragmatism of these leaders is rarely a major part of their reputations, largely because they have led in situations allowing them greater freedom to define their own projects. Thus they have enjoyed interpretive success. Historical context influences perceptions of leaders' authenticity and those leaders who achieve more are likely to be perceived as authentic because it is easier to remember and identify their apparent beliefs.

Helms and 't Hart each consider effectiveness as one of their three criteria vital to successful or "good" political leadership. For Helms this includes the ability to solve problems using democratic means, and may include other benefits such as efficiency (2012: 655). 't Hart also emphasises problem solving, but focuses especially on inspiring and persuading followers to assist in this, as successful leaders must acknowledge the limits of their effectiveness when acting alone (2011: 326). This is closely related to 't Hart's second criterion, that leaders maintain support throughout the complex networks of government (2011: 326). Like many of the authors mentioned above, Helms and 't Hart each stress outcomes as a means of understanding success but each suggest elements of the leadership process that are essential to procuring better outcomes.

Helms' criterion of responsibility (2012: 655) mirrors 't Hart's requirement that leaders should be trustworthy and accountable (2011: 327). For each author, these concerns relate to responsible and accountable government. Both are underpinned by concerns of appropriate and ethical action. 't Hart's analysis

suggests there are tensions among the three qualities and leaders must strike appropriate balances (2011: 328-330). For example, they must balance demands for ethical leadership with demands for effective leadership. Overemphasising ethical leadership can mean that less is achieved, while a sole focus on effectiveness can lead to improper practices that diminish support for the leader and actually hinder long term effectiveness ('t Hart 2011: 328). Such a course may diminish support for politicians and national political institutions. The contextual approach of this thesis suggests that this trade off varies. In certain contexts, such as crises and war, national needs differ, and the balance favours effective leadership to such an extent that minor ethical failings are more easily justified. Thus, even when taking a micro-level approach and focusing on apparently universal criteria of leadership success, we must understand the context through which those criteria apply.

Buller and James have developed an additional process-oriented approach for understanding success in British political leadership (2012). Their *statecraft* approach assesses political leadership more broadly defined than in this thesis, and relies on four characteristics: developing a winning electoral strategy, establishing a 'reputation for governing competence' (Buller and James 2012: 541), managing parties, and establishing 'political argument hegemony' (2012: 542). This last point can be more simply described as winning the rhetorical contest of ideas. Three of these points are largely uncontroversial. Managing parties and winning the rhetorical contest of ideas are discussed in this thesis, although not through Buller and James' lens. Developing a winning electoral strategy is clearly important, although this thesis focuses more on performance in the job than on elections.

The second of Buller and James' criteria, establishing a reputation for governing competence, is less thoroughly conceptualised, reducing the task of

governing to creating the perception of competence at the expense of material achievement. A pure focus on perceptions of policy competence, rather than both perceived and material elements, can downplay the successes of reforming leaders who lead through turbulent times and overemphasise the success of leaders who lead during tranquil times. This is especially likely given Buller and James' use of public opinion data to measure perceived governing competence (2012: 546-548). Perceptions of Tony Blair's government in the UK were highly positive on economic and financial policy throughout Blair's prime ministership. However, about a year after handing over to Gordon Brown, New Labour's economic management was questioned because of Britain's exposure to the global financial crisis. Perceptions of competence cannot substitute for actual competence when analysing political leaders. Both must be examined. Additionally, examining competence in material terms requires us to understand the different challenges that leaders face in a way that the statecraft approach does not.

*Skills and Character*

Other areas of political leadership research focus on the skills leaders need for success, as well as essential psychological characteristics. Greenstein emphasises leaders' communication, management of colleagues, political skill, vision, cognitive style and emotional intelligence (2003a: 5-6). Greenstein accepts that institutional context is important and that the job of the presidency varies greatly over time. He asserts that the modern presidency is categorically different from the presidency before Franklin Roosevelt. If this were true, it would present difficulties for the approach that this thesis takes, as it would mean we could not compare presidents before and after Roosevelt. Yet Greenstein finds that the same set of skills was necessary for a president to succeed in George Washington's time as in George W. Bush's (Greenstein

2009: 100). That the same skills were required suggests that the job differed far less than the modern presidency thesis suggests.

Skills-based approaches tell us more about the importance of certain leadership behaviours in achieving goals than they do about the concept of success. Particular skills may correlate with successful leadership, but this requires a pre-existing understanding of success. Naturally, the possession of skills alone cannot guarantee success. There is far more to be gained by investigating the interaction between skills and context. If a leader fails to convince the public of an initiative that she seeks to implement, skills-based leadership studies typically argue that this results from inferior communications skills, even if previously the leader's communications skills appeared exemplary. Greenstein's framework has been reapplied in Britain by Theakston in an analysis of Gordon Brown's leadership (2011). This thesis agrees with his suggestion that historical context needs to be factored in to Greenstein's approach (Theakston 2011: 97).

Lord argues that personality flaws are generally the most important factors in explaining failures of leaders' projects (2003: 10). This is a difficult argument to sustain; all leaders have flaws yet some succeed despite them. The study of leaders' personalities is approached more systematically by Barber, in his work on character and attitude in predicting presidents' performance (1992). His typology predicted that active (as opposed to passive) presidents with positive (as opposed to negative) attitudes towards their jobs would be most successful. His prediction of Richard Nixon's failure gave his work greater prominence, but it has since been heavily criticised for its lack of theoretical foundation (George 1974, Bowles 1999: 19). Furthermore, there are numerous examples of presidents and prime ministers who would be categorised as passive, but whose reputations suggest they were successful. Most obviously, US President Ronald Reagan and Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke are

two leaders with strong reputations despite expending less energy in their jobs than many of their peers. Similarly, President Jimmy Carter is generally considered a failure despite his active-positive status (Barber 1992: 447).

Skills are necessary for success as a political leader. However, the suggestion that certain skills are universally important ignores the diversity of those who have been successful. It also ignores the differences in expectations of leaders at different times in history and leads to simplifications in determining for example "good" or "poor" communicators, or less helpfully, to assessments that suggest a leader is both good and poor. The example of George W. Bush is indicative. Bush is not considered to be among the great orators or communicators, but his folksy manner and the imperfections in his delivery appealed to many Americans who could more readily see him as "one of them" (Kane and Patapan 2012: 63). As Kane and Patapan argue, the best rhetoric in modern politics is often that which is not instantly recognisable as rhetoric; modern persuasion is an 'artless art' (2010). Publics often see high oratory either as dangerous and subversive, or as empty and unlikely to be fulfilled (Kane and Patapan 2010). Greenstein's own assessment suggests that Bush was generally better when unscripted and often poor when reading a prepared statement (2003b: 15). However, there are many exceptions to both sides of this assessment and an explanation that includes context appears more helpful.

Bush's communication in the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks was effective in, 'rallying domestic and international support for his administration's "framing" of the crisis and the government's preferred response to it' despite his apparent lack of oratorical skill ('t Hart, Tindall and Brown 2009: 475). It was a situation that suited Bush's simple delivery style. While Bush succeeded in his crisis rhetoric in this instance, he failed in the Hurricane Katrina crisis four years later ('t Hart, Tindall and Brown 2009).

Whether we consider Bush to have been a poor orator or one who was artfully artless, this is a further indication that skill alone cannot predict success in a single facet of the presidency, let alone in its entirety. Bush managed through the September 11 crisis better than Hurricane Katrina partly because existing organisational structures were better placed to inform him. This meant he was more able to communicate what the public needed to know or at least what it wanted to hear. While Bush made rhetorical mistakes in the Katrina response, these were not solely about his rhetorical skills. The context encouraged his success in the former instance and his failure in the latter.

There is a significant body of research building on the notion that skills are context-sensitive (Hargrove and Owens 2003, Hargrove 2001, Masciulli and Knight 2009: 116, Helms 2012, Bell, Hargrove and Theakston 1999). These studies suggest that skills are reinforced by favourable contexts and less effective in unfavourable contexts. Furthermore, skill can allow a leader to alter the context, making it more suitable ('t Hart 2012). Nevertheless, there are limits to how much leaders can redefine contexts. Clearly, leaders can respond to crises in ways that enhance their authority or ways that will diminish that authority (Boin, McConnell and 't Hart 2008). While it is easy to imagine a leader other than Bush being advantaged by the Hurricane Katrina context, Katrina also had a material reality that no leader could change. Institutional and administrative problems, many of them within the state of Louisiana and many at the federal level, affected the US Government's response. Overcoming some of these problems would have required considerable foresight; while many others could not have been overcome by any president.

Another school of the literature emphasises the need for leaders to exercise prudence, Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom. This is particularly apparent among scholars who emphasise ethics in political leadership (Uhr 2005, Dorsey 2002, Hargrove 1998, Dobell 1998). Essentially, prudence requires

judgment about the salient moral issues but it also requires that leaders exercise the judgment to understand what is possible in their situation (Uhr 2005: 70). Hargrove extends this, arguing that the master skill of 'discernment' allows leaders to determine the appropriate balance of prudence and purpose for their particular historical circumstances (1998: 41). Discernment allows political leaders to understand which goals to pursue and how best to pursue them. Like other skills-based approaches, prudence and discernment can suffer in that we can only know that leaders have exercised them well by the results of their actions, rather than by observing the actions themselves. As Rockman notes, the same process can lead to good or bad outcomes, so it is difficult to argue that good outcomes imply good processes (1984: 194). This makes defining success using skills problematic but prudence and discernment are important skills, especially as they acknowledge leaders' need to act differently in different circumstances.

**Historical Context in Leadership Studies**

This thesis' argument that greater attention to context is crucial to understanding leadership success, develops from the growing historical context-based approach to leadership studies most commonly associated with Skowronek (1986, 1997, 2008, also Crockett 2002, Polsky 2012, Nichols and Myers 2010, Plotke 1996, Laing 2012, Cook and Polsky 2005). Thus far, this approach has only been applied to the American Presidency but it can be applied to the study of democratic leadership in other nations. Skowronek's approach suggests that leaders' opportunities differ depending on when they are in power. Some have the chance to make lasting changes, while others have minimal opportunities (Skowronek 1997). The natural consequence for understanding leadership success is that leaders in different circumstances *should* act differently and therefore should be judged against different criteria. Crockett (2002) has made this point but as yet there is little research that

develops criteria for assessing groups of leaders. Crockett only utilised this point in relation to leaders in one historical context.

Skowronek's book, *The Politics Presidents Make* (1997), gives the most thorough account of his "political time" theory on which most historical-contextual approaches to the presidency are based. He describes three permanent impulses of the presidency: it is order-shattering, order-affirming and order-creating (1997: 20). There are natural tensions among these impulses, but in certain situations the tensions are easier to resolve. Skowronek argues that presidents' authority waxes and wanes depending on the strength or vulnerability of the dominant regime in national politics, as well as presidents' affiliation with or opposition to the regime.

The regime comprises a collection of ideas, a coalition of supporters and a group of institutions that entrenches itself within national government and maintains a particular, ideologically-based logic of government action (Skowronek 1986: 289). If the regime appears effective in dealing with problems of the day and a broad but coherent coalition of political actors and elites continues to support its ideas, then the regime is resilient. If the coalition fractures and the ideas appear unable to solve contemporary political problems, a crisis emerges and the regime is vulnerable. Regimes usually contain the seeds of their own destruction (see Plotke 1996) because its coalition supporters have different goals and interests, some of which are contradictory. As some regime goals are achieved, groups that sought them are less likely to continue providing energetic support for the regime. Other groups will likely abandon the regime if their goals are not achieved.

During Herbert Hoover's presidency, the regime was vulnerable. Support for orthodox ideas had all but vanished as the coalition that supported them had fractured and dissipated. The enervation of the regime began before the Great

Depression, ensuring that the existing regime was unlikely to galvanise support for a sufficient response to overcome this crisis. In these circumstances Franklin Roosevelt was able to repudiate the old regime and eventually create a new one based on New Deal social measures and Keynesian economics. This example also demonstrates the distinction between leaders opposed to the existing regime as was Roosevelt, and those like Hoover, who are affiliated with it. Leaders' relationships with regimes of differing strengths create a typology of four types of president as shown in the table below.

| Regime | Opposed leader | Affiliated leader |
|---|---|---|
| **Vulnerable** | Reconstruction | Disjunction |
| **Resilient** | Pre-emption | Articulation |

Table 1. Recurrent structures of Presidential Authority (Skowronek 1997: 36).

Reconstructive presidents are those, like Roosevelt, who oppose vulnerable regimes, repudiating the existing logic of government action and beginning new regimes based on new ideas. These presidents have the greatest opportunity to make major changes and leave formidable legacies. They usually meet the criteria discussed above that see them judged as among the most successful in both rankings and other interpretive studies (Nichols 2012). For this reason, they are a particular focus of this thesis, with two of the four articles examining reconstructive leadership. Skowronek names Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan as reconstructors. Their situation is the one that best resolves the tension among presidential impulses. Reconstructive presidents gain warrants to shatter existing regimes, but are also able to re-affirm the values of the polity and constitution (Skowronek 1997: 20, also see Johansson 2009: 39).

Presidents who are affiliated with a resilient regime are termed articulators. They seek to continue and to improve the regime rather than to destroy or radically alter it. Articulators often seek to extend the reconstruction by implementing programmes that were part of the original design of the regime but for various reasons were not implemented by predecessors, or they seek to resolve new problems while retaining the existing logic of the regime. Articulators are the most common presidents. They lack the opportunity to make the major, lasting reconstructive changes but they are not as constrained as disjunctive presidents. Articulators are generally unable to maintain the strength of the regime, as their achievements lead regime supporters to reduce their involvement in politics, while their failures lead supporters to become disenchanted. George H. W. Bush, Lyndon Johnson, Theodore Roosevelt, James Polk and James Monroe are the examples of articulators that Skowronek examines, though there are many more. They lack the warrants to be destructive, which limits their ability to create.

Skowronek labelled presidents who oppose a resilient regime pre-emptive. They 'interrupt a still vital discourse' (Skowronek 1997: 44), and if they remain vigorous in their opposition to the regime, their leadership tends to end in disgrace. The presidencies of Bill Clinton, Richard Nixon and Andrew Johnson ended in impeachment proceedings or resignation under threat of impeachment. For Skowronek this is no coincidence. Frustrated presidents who are prevented from repudiating and replacing the existing regime attempt to find other ways to use their powers and circumvent opposition. Pre-emption also encourages opposition parties to become vitriolic. They are affronted by both pre-emptive presidents' attempts to replace the existing order and by their sometimes questionable methods of doing so.

Skowronek's examination of pre-emptive presidents was less thorough than any of his other types, but Crockett devoted an entire book to them (2002).

Each author noticed that pre-emptive presidents avoided a calamitous end if they pursued a moderate course of action. Skowronek argued Eisenhower's presidency showed 'that knowing when not to do things can be instrumental in maintaining authority' (1997: 49). This case is also pressed by Harris in his investigation of Eisenhower (1997). Crockett's more complete investigation of pre-emption allowed him to generalise and state that 'moderation is more appropriate and successful for opposition presidents' (2002: 8). While this situation undoubtedly calls for a unique leadership style, this thesis disagrees that pre-emptive leaders should necessarily apply moderation. Pre-emptive leaders can be more successful by pursuing an active course that works to dismantle the regime they oppose.

Presidents of disjunction are the last of Skowronek's presidential categories. These presidents are affiliated with a vulnerable regime. Just as reconstructive leaders are usually seen as successes, disjunctive leaders are generally seen as failures. They are associated with failing ideas and lack the support to achieve much of lasting significance. When they attempt to alter the dominant ideas, substantial portions of their parties and coalition supporters are uncooperative, making presidents' positions even more difficult. Jimmy Carter, Herbert Hoover, James Buchanan, John Quincy Adams and John Adams are Skowronek's presidents of disjunction. Not only do these leaders fail to resolve the tension between impulses to create and destroy, they lack adequate warrants to convincingly follow either impulse.

*How Political Time Can Help Us to Understand Success*

The presidents within each type have similar levels of authority. In terms of the challenges they face in order to achieve their goals, presidents often have more in common with other presidents from the distant past than with their immediate predecessors and successors. Leaders' greatest difficulties are

defined by their position in the cycle of political time rather than the linear development of political institutions that Skowronek calls "secular time". It matters little that Reagan used television to communicate whereas Jefferson communicated primarily through his writing. Each had a message to deliver and each needed to rally a coalition of political elites and voters who would support a significant shift in the ideas and logic of national government. Each was able to repudiate the existing orthodoxy and obtain sweeping authority to create a new one. This is crucial to the study of success. Reagan and Jefferson can be more readily compared as fellow reconstructive leaders than Reagan and his disjunctive predecessor, Carter. The strong tendency to place disjunctive leaders near the bottom of rankings studies and reconstructive leaders near the top, and to celebrate reconstructive leaders in more theoretical leadership studies, suggests that much of what we usually consider success is about structural advantage rather than performance.

This thesis builds upon Skowronek's view of presidential leadership to develop a framework for understanding successful political leadership with sensitivity to historical context. This involves investigating questions arising from Skowronek's work. Skowronek was more interested in explaining the history of the American presidency than in investigating how each of his presidential types could succeed. This thesis contends that as Skowronek's different presidents have unequal opportunities it is unfair to compare them as though their opportunities were equal. Beyond that, the different leadership types must respond to different societal demands and therefore should act differently.

Nichols and Myers' efforts to develop our understanding of reconstructions, provide a foundation for developing tasks by which to judge reconstructive leaders (2010). They consider three main tasks essential to completing a reconstruction. Reconstructive presidents must shift the main axis of partisan

cleavage, assemble a new majority partisan coalition and institutionalise their new regime (2010: 815-816). The nature of these tasks requires some elaboration. Shifting the main axis of partisan cleavage entails raising the salience of certain conflicts and policy domains. For Ronald Reagan this involved linking his stands on reducing taxation, deregulation, and an aggressive Cold-War foreign policy, 'to a broader worldview emphasizing that "government *is* the problem." Disputes over this political worldview, in effect, became the dominant partisan cleavage' (Nichols and Myers 2010: 816). Shifting the axis of partisan cleavage is primarily a task that can be completed through rhetoric.

Assembling a new majority partisan coalition requires that presidents convince legislators and other political elites of the efficacy of their plans and gain elite support to help instigate the new regime (2010: 816). This task will differ in majoritarian parliamentary democracies. While prime ministers need to convince social groups and stakeholders, stable parliamentary majorities ensure that those leaders concentrate on convincing elements of their own parties that reconstructive ideas are necessary. Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke's experience is instructive. The parliamentary opposition agreed with many of his reforms, but Hawke faced a delicate task convincing elements of his own caucus, particularly the left faction, of his market-based economic reforms.

Institutionalising the regime is a more variable task than the previous two. It requires that governments create or reorder political structures in a way that entrenches the ideas of the new regime (Nichols and Myers 2010: 816-817). Orren and Skowronek provide an account of this in their review of works on the major changes of the Roosevelt reconstruction (1998). They argue that reconstructors must abolish or at least substantially weaken government departments, authorities and other bodies that may have reason to oppose the

creation of a new regime, before producing new bodies to fit the goals of the new regime (Orren and Skowronek 1998: 698-701).

In Reagan's reconstruction, the key to institutionalisation was to reduce the funding and power of certain government departments (see Cook and Polsky 2005). In other reconstructions, it may be that the creation of new regulations and bodies to defend them are most consequential in institutionalising a regime. Nichols and Myers also consider that there is an electoral element to institutionalisation. Reconstructors should seek to alter electoral, political and social structures in a way that reinforces the reconstructive party's electoral advantage for subsequent years (2010: 817).

Nichols and Myers' list of tasks is a useful beginning for understanding success in reconstructive leadership. However, this thesis argues that the tasks themselves need to be made more complex in order to distinguish the quality of one reconstructive leader's performance from that of another. This argument is examined in detail in the third article. The thesis reapplies Nichols and Myers' work in the Australian political system in order to gain a fuller understanding of how reconstructive leaders can succeed. It seeks to develop frameworks for understanding success in the underexplored other three categories of Skowronek's leadership typology.

Success is more difficult to define for the three non-reconstructive types than it is for reconstructive leaders. Inherent in any assessment of leadership success are complex normative questions about how politics should work. Skowronek describes American political development as consisting of decades of "normal" or orthodox development, characterised by incremental change, followed by short bursts of rapid development associated with and propelled by crises such as the Civil War and the Great Depression. Arguably, creative political development requires such crises to advance society. Certainly, they

make major policy change easier (Hall 1993, Goldfinch and 't Hart 2003: 238). However, an equally strong argument can be made for avoiding crises because of their negative effects on people. From this perspective, leaders should encourage a more incremental form of development, focused on preventing crises. Such a route is at best uncertain, and it may not be possible to escape this cycle of crises and bursts of reform.

A further question is whether leaders should sabotage older regimes at the first signs of weakness and allow another leader to take up the reconstructive mantle, or try to prevent the death of the regime and the suffering it would cause. When leaders are associated with the enervation of regimes, their reputations suffer (Nichols 2012: 291) but this is also a normative concern. Clearly, articulators should be motivated to maintain and strengthen the institutions and structures of a regime, but should pre-emptive leaders be praised or scorned for acting to destroy a working regime? Crockett suggests that their reputations suffer if they follow such a path (2002). However, pre-emptive leaders may be a necessary part of the cycle in a way that is currently not well understood. Perhaps if we think about them as generating positive destruction, we can judge them as successful even in a normative sense. These issues are examined in greater detail in the fourth article of this thesis.

Political time interacts with styles of leadership. There is a distinction in the way political time works for those who take more active approaches and those who take more moderate or passive stances. Dwight Eisenhower, Robert Menzies and Calvin Coolidge are some of the most obvious examples of the latter approach. Their times in power saw them more concerned to maintain than to change. Innovation occurred during their leaderships, but such change was more cautious and incremental under them than under activist leaders like Franklin Roosevelt, Ben Chifley, Gough Whitlam, or Lyndon Johnson. The comparison of these two approaches to leadership is addressed throughout

the thesis, with the finding that neither is always superior. In certain circumstances one or other approach gives greater, or even just different, possibilities of success. For example, there is little room for a moderate reconstructive leader, but this approach may prove more successful for articulators.

Political leadership success has three central components: personal success, partisan regime success and normative success. The extent to which these are available varies for Skowronek's four different types of leaders. Personal success is the most synonymous with reputation. In personal success, political leaders' actions lead to desired outcomes and personal acclaim. The most common forms of personal success are electoral victories, policy achievements and positive opinion poll ratings. This form of success is important in the short-term. Few if any personal successes are exclusively the result of a political leader's actions, but these successes are personal as the leader's standing and reputation benefits from them.

Partisan regime success derives from leaders' influence on regimes. They can either strengthen or weaken regimes, which will advantage like-minded successors and disadvantage political opponents. Partisan regime success is longer-term than personal success. As well as helping the leader's party, it affects the political future of the nation. Depending on their affiliation with or opposition to the regime, leaders must improve or destroy regime ideas and institutions, as well as enhancing or diminishing the coalition supporting the regime. Doing so either allows leaders' own alterations to national politics to endure, or prevents opponents' alterations from doing so.

Normative success is a complicated concept to investigate. Political leaders' whose actions are harmful to the population or damage the institutions of government, make a negative contribution to their national politics (see Ciulla

and Forsyth 2011). Normative success has two elements. One requires that political leaders act to implement their vision of good society (see Hargrove 1998). The other is both ethical and constitutional and requires that they enhance the office they hold. Leaders' political beliefs will dictate their visions of good society. This thesis examines normative success from leaders' points of view to avoid using observers' political preferences as criteria of success. However, all leaders must respect citizens' rights, regardless of their personal political inclinations (see Thompson 2010: 25-26).

The constitutional element of normative success requires that leaders encourage positive perceptions of the institutions of government and of their own office in particular. This requires that leaders respect the constitutional character of their political system and encourage democratic behaviour (Thompson 2010: 24). Leaders' positions in their constitutions are essential to their legitimacy as office holders. Furthermore, the institutions of government are designed to lessen the effects of ethical failings of leaders (Kane and Patapan 2012). Thus, if leaders weaken the institutions of government they risk either making their successors' jobs more difficult, or diluting the institutions so that they can no longer provide constraints on improper behaviour. Therefore, leaders must respect proper processes and allow other political actors to perform their roles in the democratic process, as well as remaining accountable for their own actions (Thompson 2010, 't Hart 2011: 327). If, as noted at the beginning of this thesis, democracy relies upon good leadership (Kane and Patapan 2012: 1), then leaders must ensure that they encourage future good leadership as well as practising it themselves.

## Issues with using the political time approach

*The Waning of Political Time*

The most obvious difficulty of using the political time approach is that Skowronek argues it will, at some point, cease to explain patterns of political leadership. In his terms political time is "waning" (Skowronek 1997: 407-464, see also Laing 2012, Schier 2011), and the cyclical pattern he describes is weakening. The waning argument is about the increasing complexity of American society, although similar arguments are made about other modern democracies (see Keane 2009). More institutions exist than ever before, which makes the task of changing the institutional landscape to support a new regime more challenging. Creating a coalition becomes harder too, as social groupings continually increase in number and diversity. The waning of political time confounds presidents' attempts to use coalitions to ensure success, particularly in reconstructions. Conversely, it also means that presidents are more independent, and less constrained by the whims of coalitions, an advantage for most non-reconstructive presidents. For Skowronek, waning will lead to a time when all presidents will resemble pre-emptive leaders.

Clearly, this time has not yet come. Skowronek has rarely returned to the waning of time argument in recent years (Laing 2012: 239-240), but the last few presidents have been easy to place in the political time typology. Importantly, there has been no difficulty identifying the two Bushs as articulators. There is room for conjecture as to whether Barack Obama is a pre-emptor, or a particularly constrained reconstructor (Laing 2012, *cf* Johansson 2010).[1] The argument that he is a reconstructor relies on the occurrence of a major financial crisis in 2008. However, the coalition supporting neoliberal economic

[1] In 2010, Johansson argued that either was possible, at what was an early stage of Obama's presidency.

orthodoxy remains fairly strong and certainly unchallenged by any convincing alternative movement. The major exogenous shock of the financial crisis may seem like an event that should prompt a reconstruction, but this is a common misreading of Skowronek's argument. Skowronek argued that the apparent failure of disjunctive leaders was due to the collapse of their regimes, not an exogenous shock or crisis. The confusion arises because reconstructive leaders have used crises to build momentum for their reconstructive projects. However, crises are insufficient to ensure a reconstruction.

Polsky argues that regimes vary and some allow leaders greater opportunities than others (2012: 71). While this is almost certainly true, it does not preclude the waning of political time. It does not counter the argument that increased societal complexity makes coalition formation more difficult. This dissertation argues that political time has not yet waned so that Skowronek's typology no longer operates, but that there will likely be a time when this occurs. Yet even if certain that political time has waned, we should not abandon the idea of a contextual basis for understanding leadership success. When political time has waned, leadership scholars will need to reconceptualise the context through which leaders operate in order to keep pace with empirical changes.

*Determinism, Structure and Agency*

Many early criticisms of Skowronek's work suggested it was deterministic (Arnold 1994, Hoekstra 1999). Naturally, this would present a major problem for this thesis which uses Skowronek's approach to investigate successful leadership, a phenomenon that relies heavily upon leaders having the agency to either succeed or fail. If leaders' success or failure were predetermined by political time, this would be better described as luck rather than success. As noted above, Skowronek argues that leaders of the same type respond to

similar authority problems, although this does not mean that they respond to them in the same way, or that outcomes are certain.

Leaders display a wide range of responses to similar problems, and even those who attempt to achieve the same goals often do so in different ways. Certain reconstructive leaders, for example, have reconstructed politics in a more complete and more secure way than others. Skowronek notes Grover Cleveland's lost opportunity in 1896 as a leader's failure to make the most of a reconstructive opportunity (Skowronek 1997: 48-49). Reagan's reconstruction was also completed by others in Congress after his presidency ended (Nichols and Myers 2010: 817). Thus, even among leaders who are usually considered successful, some are more successful than others.

The root of questions about determinism in Skowronek's work is a misunderstanding of path dependency. Path dependency is a major part of most historical-institutionalist understandings of politics, but there is a distinction between path dependency and determinism. Path dependency does not guarantee an outcome or even a way of proceeding (Pierson 2004: 52-53). It suggests that certain options are more likely than others but nothing is proscribed. In this way, path dependency is probabilistic rather than deterministic. Furthermore, as we can know which the more probable path is, we can also know when leaders make conscious efforts to take more difficult paths and therefore understand their success or failure with this in mind.

A large part of Skowronek's contribution to the field of political leadership is his adjustment of the balance between structure and agency. Most previous leadership studies left this issue implicit in their work, and tended to privilege agency over structure. However, Skowronek's greater focus on structure should not be read as eliminating agency, even if his defence of his position on this score is not entirely convincing (see Skowronek 1995). Although

Skowronek does not directly engage in this issue at great length, his greater acknowledgement of structural constraints in the form of historical context allows us to observe the complexity of the relationship between structure and agency as it applies to political leaders.

As explained below, even the most constrained leaders, disjunctive leaders, have significant capacity to act and to succeed in various ways. However, disjunctive leaders' lesser ability to take credit for their successes and to ensure that people understand them as successes, limits their capacity to use their powers in the future. Similarly, the successes of those leaders who can best control the definition of their actions, reconstructive leaders, encourages other actors to perceive these leaders as successful, and to allow them the authority to use their power on subsequent occasions. Thus, the relationship between structure and agency in this theoretical approach can be described as both dialectical and iterative (see Archer 1995).

*Leaders' Understandings of Politics*

The political time perspective can be criticised for its abstraction and its removal from leaders' actual experiences. The study of political leadership has generally sought to retain a greater practical element than many other fields within political studies. Furthermore, success is a topic that lends itself to lecturing practitioners about their shortcomings and achievements. Famously, when in office John F. Kennedy reacted to a presidential rankings study by asking dismissively, 'How the hell can you tell? Only the President himself can know what his real pressures and real alternatives are' (quoted in Schlesinger 1997: 180). If Kennedy is right, then there is little point in anyone outside of the political arena studying any form of institutional politics. However, it is fair to add that leaders themselves have difficulty gaining sufficient perspectives on their actions to judge their own success or failure.

Many of the efforts of leaders and those close to them are focused on surviving until the end of the week or day, rather than on the long-term effects of their tenure.

We know that Barack Obama and his political advisor David Axelrod enthusiastically read Skowronek's work hoping that Obama would have the opportunity to reconstruct American politics (Johansson 2010). Ironically, Obama's reading may have encouraged him to hold false expectations of what was politically possible. This emphasises the need for leaders to discern the possibilities of their times (Hargrove 1998). Obama is unusual for his interest in Skowronek's work, but it is not uncommon for leaders to take an interest in theoretical approaches to leadership. Jimmy Carter reportedly read Barber's *The Presidential Character* before his election and hoped to be an active-positive president in his typology. However, it is the nature of political leadership studies that much of the day to day experience of leaders is removed from attempts to analyse and compare leaders' tenures in their entirety. Leaders' perceptions of the job are different to those of observers.

The political time approach to leadership success takes first person experiences of political leadership into account. Its historical focus encourages such research as much as any other approach to leadership, although a concomitant focus on taking long periods of history into account means that the fine details of leaders' jobs can easily be downplayed in these accounts. Skowronek's work loses much when it is solely reduced to his historical patterns, and such reductionist versions of his work may appear to be oversimplifications to political actors. Many academics would consider the knowledge that political actors agreed with their accounts a dubious distinction. It certainly does not guarantee that an academic approach is accurate. Any assessment of success is likely to disappoint many if not most leaders, giving them cause to respond dismissively to the assessment itself.

*Limitations*

Skowronek's political time theory is more conducive to explaining success in majoritarian systems and where executive leaders are strong, than in consensus systems and where executive leaders are weaker. In part, these limitations result from political time's requirement that leaders propagate regimes. The creation of regimes requires creativity that is most likely to come from individual rather than more collaborative leadership. To suggest that a weak leader such as a Dutch Minister-President is reconstructive would be strange, given that traditionally, Dutch leaders have not themselves had the creative capacity to reconstruct society in the way that Skowronek suggests.

As regime creation is most often associated with crises, ideological control of government is crucial. When situations are framed as crises, parties tend to use their existing ideological frameworks to explain the failures that led to the current problem and to define solutions (McCaffrie 2009). This can be crucial in defining the new regime and the direction that it takes. Coalition and minority governments typical of consensus systems ensure that there is a greater need for ideological compromise, which means that regime patterns are less likely to take hold. This does not preclude the formation of regimes in consensus democracies, although an examination of historical patterns in countries such as Germany reveals a more incremental development path than that typical of majoritarian nations.

## The Articles

**I. The Politics Prime Ministers Make: Political Time and Executive Leadership in Westminster Systems.**

The first article of the thesis examines Skowronek's political time theory and argues for its applicability to so-called Westminster political systems. The extent to which "Westminster" is an accurate description of the Australian or even British political systems is contested, particularly with continual institutional development in all modern democracies since the term was first used. This article does not suggest that all Westminster nations have identical institutions. Rather, it agrees with Rhodes, Wanna and Weller, who argue that there are still significant similarities of history and inclination that encourage their use as similar comparative examples (2009: 230).

The reapplication of the theory provides a necessary stepping stone to the later articles and their cross-national approach to understanding leadership success using Skowronek's approach. The article introduces political time theory and investigates the utility of transplanting it into a Westminster institutional environment, in this case Australia. It finds that the political time approach is applicable in Australia, and suggests it will also be applicable in other Westminster nations. There are two main requirements of a political system that allow us to transplant Skowronek's political time theory. The first is a tradition of competing progressive and conservative ideas and political actors in a system in which one or other of these groups is capable of dominating national politics. This is particularly appropriate for traditional Westminster nations in which majoritarian governments still prevail, though less so for others like New Zealand where electoral system changes make majority governments less likely.

The second requirement for transplanting Skowronek's theory is that the executive leader is strong and capable of acting independently and creatively within the national political system. Again, this suits most traditional Westminster nations where prime ministers have considerable influence over political outcomes and are often the main engineers of political change. The article determines that the three impulses Skowronek identifies (order-shattering, order-creating and order-affirming) are intrinsic to executive political leadership in modern democracies rather than specifically derived from the US Constitution.

The application of Skowronek's theory in Australia is demonstrated by illustrative case studies of Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke and Paul Keating. This empirical investigation of political time suggested certain adjustments to the theory itself. Political time does not necessarily shift when leaders' terms begin and end. There is a strong possibility that regime strength will alter during long-serving leaders' terms. This can mean that leaders shift from reconstruction to articulation during their time in office. Changes during leaders' tenures can alter their authority and hence, their ability to act.

The way the thesis uses Skowronek's theory develops throughout and this article provides a less sophisticated understanding of regimes than the later articles. In particular, this article does not emphasise coalitions of political elites nor acknowledge that the failure of a regime is inevitable. Instead it focuses on the role of exogenous shocks in encouraging the perception of regime failure. These shortcomings reflect the article's reliance on the version of Skowronek's political time theory found in *The Politics Presidents Make* (1997). While this is his most thorough account of the theory, it is limited in the detail it gives to regimes themselves. Political regimes have been examined more thoroughly by other scholars than by Skowronek himself. With many of

these examinations published after the article for this thesis was written in 2009-2010 (Nichols and Myers 2010, Polsky 2012).

**II. Understanding the Success of Presidents and Prime Ministers: The Role of Opposition Parties.**

The second article investigates the creative role of opposition parties in the success of prime ministers and presidents. Oppositions can obviously play significant roles in limiting the success of government leaders but this paper describes three ways in which oppositions contribute to government leaders' success. The article examines opposition to reconstructive leaders in the US, the UK and Australia in the 1980s. Many opposition contributions are unintentional, with their failures allowing reconstructive leaders greater scope to make their changes.

More interestingly, opposition parties also make significant positive contributions to the success of reconstructive leaders. This is most obvious in the Australian example in which the Liberal-National coalition supported many of the Hawke Government economic reforms. Thus, the opposition made it easier to pass reforms through parliament, but also made it easier to secure public support for the direction of the changes. The other positive contribution oppositions made was in entrenching reconstructive reforms once they achieved government. After attempting to alter the Reagan legacy, Bill Clinton came to accept that 'the era of big government [was] over'. Similarly, New Labour under Tony Blair accepted many of Margaret Thatcher's changes.

Although this article does not explicitly mention the three types of leadership success developed later in the thesis, it is personal success that oppositions contribute most heavily towards. Furthermore, they contribute to leaders' partisan regime success as they accommodate to the government leaders'

positions and contribute to their normative success by allowing reconstructive leaders the scope to implement their vision of good society.

This article's most important message for the thesis is that oppositions can be significant contributors to political leaders' success and that any understanding of political leadership success that does not take opposition into account misses a crucial factor. Government leaders must listen to oppositions at all times, not just during reconstructions, as their suggestions may have resonance with significant sectors of society, may be more popular than government suggestions and may even be better in terms of achieving governments' policy goals. At the very least, government leaders must be able to explain why their plans are better than their opponents' plans. This is not only the case in Australia and the UK but also in the US, where partisan opposition is more diffuse and less institutionalised but where there is no shortage of opportunities for opposition parties to make their alternative positions known.

**III. A Contextual Framework for Assessing Reconstructive Prime Ministerial Success.**

The third article focuses on reconstructive prime ministers in Australia and presents a method for assessing the relative success of this leadership type. The basis for the framework is Nichols and Myers' work on how presidents 'exploit the opportunity for reconstructive leadership' (2010). Nichols and Myers present three tasks: shifting the axis of partisan cleavage, maintaining a majority coalition and institutionalising the regime. They argue that the three tasks must be completed for a reconstruction to occur. I significantly amend their conceptualisation, arguing that completion of the tasks happens incrementally, so that one reconstructive leader may do a better job of completing one of the tasks than another. These tasks are not completed sequentially as Nichols and Myers imply, but are on-going and must be

continually managed. This is more apparent when we remember the importance of oppositions, which often seek to prevent or undo government leaders' achievements.

A further departure from Nichols and Myers' original work is that each task is more complex than their description indicates. Each task is multifaceted and leaders can be judged on different facets within each task. The task of shifting the axis of partisan cleavage has three parts. Leaders must repudiate the previous regime and if there is a crisis that accompanies the regime downfall, they should frame that crisis to their own benefit. In shifting the axis of partisan cleavage they must define the political and policy logic of the new regime. Finally, they must defeat alternative arguments about the nature of societal problems that lead to a reconstruction and arguments about government leaders' proposed solutions.

Maintaining a majority coalition, as described by Nichols and Myers, requires that leaders bring together 'different groups within the social structure' (2010: 816). Leaders must gather various social groups in a loose alliance that supports the reconstruction. This is vital, but Nichols and Myers largely ignore the formation of a similar coalition in the legislature. While the two elements of coalitions are related, one does not guarantee the other and the actions required of leaders to maintain each coalition greatly vary.

The third task, institutionalising the regime, varies depending on the nature of the new regime. One part of the institutionalisation process, institutionalising electoral advantage, Nichols and Myers describe as an optional addition to the other elements. This part of the task is not especially noticeable in the Australian examples examined. In discussing institutionalisation, Nichols and Myers primarily focus on how regime ideas are entrenched into government. These ideas could involve state-building and additional governmental

services, or a contraction of the state and a new logic of smaller government. Orren and Skowronek (1998: 698-701) remind us that in this task we must also examine reconstructive leaders methods of destroying existing institutions to enable their governmental rearrangements.

The empirical section of the third article compares the reconstructive prime ministerships of John Curtin, Ben Chifley and Bob Hawke in Australia. It finds that Bob Hawke had the most success of the three leaders. He was particularly successful in maintaining societal and parliamentary coalitions thanks to his "consensus" style. He was also highly effective at repudiating past failures and defeating opposition alternatives, although as noted in the second article of this thesis, he was assisted by considerable opposition support. Curtin was the second most effective of these three leaders. He was better than Hawke at defining the new regime; Curtin's full employment message was a touchstone for the following decades in Australian politics. However Curtin was not as effective in maintaining a social majority, a task which he neglected to some extent. Similarly, Chifley's failings were largely the result of neglect. He was the least effective of these three reconstructive leaders, largely because of his lack of enthusiasm for rhetorical leadership. This made it difficult for him to maintain the shift in the axis of partisan cleavage, or to maintain control of the definition of the reconstruction.

This article's most important conclusion for the thesis is that the modified version of Nichols and Myers' three tasks forms an effective framework for assessing reconstructive leadership success. The framework readily adapts to the Australian political system. Maintaining a legislative coalition is the task that differs most, with a greater focus on working within parliamentary parties, than assembling supporters from both major parties, as happens in the US.

**IV. Situating Success: Analysing US Presidential Leadership in Historical Context.**

The fourth article continues the development of a framework for understanding success. Unlike the previous three articles it does not include extended case studies, but success for the four different types of leadership uses examples of 20th century US presidents. This article includes the most developed notion of leadership success presented within this thesis. It introduces personal success, partisan regime success and normative success, the three forms of political leadership success. Furthermore, it demonstrates the structural variations in their availability in different historical contexts. The article also highlights the importance of political leaders pursuing both the material and the interpretive elements of success. Given their public status, government leaders are uniquely placed to use rhetoric and create interpretive success as well as to use their institutional positions to guide material achievements.

As the article stands alone for the benefit of a different audience, it reiterates some of the findings of the third article when discussing reconstructive leadership. Unlike in the third article, the discussion uses American examples, comparing Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, and includes a focus on the three forms of political leadership success. It is more difficult to define success for Skowronek's three non-reconstructive leadership types. Articulators agree with the direction of the regime but need to update its messages to account for new societal problems. The more articulators achieve, however, the more they provoke the internal contradictions in regime coalitions and hasten the regime's eventual failure. The best option is to moderate their action and carefully manage the competing wings of their coalitions both in society and in legislatures. This means eschewing some opportunities for personal success to encourage partisan regime and normative success. They can be judged by

the coherence of the regime they leave, and by their ability to institutionalise and explain necessary changes involved in updating the regime. More active articulators tend to have greater personal successes but do more damage to the regime.

Several authors have argued that pre-emptive leaders should adopt a moderate course, because those that wield their power more actively and challenge the regime tend to diminish their reputations. Crockett (2002) is the foremost advocate of this position. However, the fourth article of this thesis disputes his position. The moderate strategy is primarily an advantage in saving pre-emptive leaders' reputations. It creates personal success but does little for the leader's party and has minimal longer term effect on the regime. Most importantly, it gives pre-emptive leaders little chance to bring about their visions of good society. Thus, the fourth article argues that an approach more like Nixon's, which sought to weaken the coalition that supported the regime, is preferable to Eisenhower's, which entrenched a regime that he believed was bad for American society. Nixon was hardly a model leader in all respects, and his blatant disregard for due process damaged perceptions of the integrity of the presidency and more broadly of American government. This was a definite failure, but it was not the inevitable result of Nixon's active stance. Given their belief that the regime is not best for the nation, pre-emptive leaders should be judged on their ability to weaken and overcome the regime.

Finally, on superficial examination it is hard to see that disjunctive leaders are capable of any form of success. The regime is dying and its ideas no longer seem capable of responding to contemporary political problems. The coalition is also divided and weak and opposed by an increasingly strong alternative political grouping. This means that disjunctive leaders must appeal to a narrow middle ground, as when they act, they are attacked either for departing from the regime or for continuing with its discredited ideas. The

narrowness of their support also inhibits their ability to achieve interpretive success, which explains why disjunctive leaders like Carter and Hoover often have significant records of legislative achievement but have reputations as abject failures. The normative advantage of disjunctive leaders is that they have the ability to experiment with new ideas and programmes, and that these often form the basis of the early years of reconstructive presidencies. We should focus most of our analysis of disjunctive leaders on this function. The need to experiment to overcome new problems means that many proposals will not be successful. Disjunctive leaders need to adopt an active stance that allows them to engage many different solutions and retain those that work. A moderate stance will not meet the challenges of this form of leadership.

**Conclusion**

Few would deny the importance of political leaders to democracies, yet publics are generally cynical about their roles and methods. This is a complex phenomenon but in part it results from unrealistic expectations people have of their leaders. Political leaders do help to create these expectations with lofty campaign rhetoric and promises; however high expectations also derive from a belief that leaders all have similar powers and therefore similar capacities. As a result, scholarly observers and publics alike tend to judge leaders against standards that are only rarely obtainable.

Once we take account of the different historical contexts political leaders occupy, we can develop criteria for judging their success that are sensitive to their varying opportunities and challenges. Such an understanding of political leadership reveals that many more of our political leaders have been successful than is commonly acknowledged. We need therefore to reorient our theoretical understanding of the broader concept of political leadership. Greater attention to historical context allows us to observe different ways for

political leaders to succeed. More importantly, it demonstrates that we need to broaden and diversify our understanding of political leadership itself to account for the fact that it does, and should do, different things at different times.

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Article 1

# The Politics Prime Ministers Make: Political Time and Executive Leadership in Westminster Systems

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*Stephen Skowronek's 1993 book The Politics Presidents Make sought to explain why some American presidents transform United States politics whilst others became prisoners of it. He begins with the premise that presidents are the primary agent of change in US politics, but argues that their success or failure hinges more on their 'fit' into the political and historical context they inherit rather than on personal skills or style. Most significant is the relationship between the president and the central policy ideas and institutional arrangements that constitute the governing orthodoxy of the day, which he terms the 'regime'. Presidents who gain power in opposition to a weak and discredited regime have the greatest opportunity to act and change politics. In contrast, those who are affiliated with and defend a weak regime usually find themselves with limited political capital.*

Skowronek's theory succeeds in providing broad explanatory narratives for the course of presidential leadership through American history. We believe it can have similar utility in interpreting executive leadership in other political systems, and that such cross-national, cross-systemic applications can help students of executive leadership to scrutinise the original theory. Our goal in this chapter is to explore the potential for Skowronek's model to be gainfully transplanted into Westminster systems in order to reinterpret the leadership

[2] The ordering of the authors' names is alphabetical rather than an indication of their relative contributions

possibilities, constraints, predicaments and performances of prime ministers. For this task we have chosen Australia, a country with a Westminster tradition that also borrowed American traditions such as a powerful elected upper house, a federation of states and a written constitution.

First we explore whether it makes sense for us to transplant the theory—whether the institutional and political premises on which Skowronek based his theory are also present in Westminster systems. Second, we apply the model to three recent Australian prime ministers, demonstrating how Skowronek's leadership types are present in Australia. In doing this, we draw out some wider implications for the original theory and reflect upon the future utility of this perspective. Although we use Australia to anchor our analysis, throughout the discussion we continue to demonstrate the wider applicability of Skowronek's theory to Westminster countries.

**The Politics Presidents Make: Patterns of Leadership Authority**

Skowronek's political time theory shows that presidents face three competing impulses; the impulse to repudiate and shatter the dominant political ideas of the day, the impulse to create a new orthodoxy, and the impulse to maintain and affirm the existing governing order and constitutional arrangements. These impulses make up the first of Skowronek's three chronological patterns of executive politics, the persistent pattern. Their paradoxical nature creates the root problem for all presidents. They must simultaneously defend what has come before, whilst also implementing change and adapting government to emerging challenges.

The second, emergent pattern, describes the development of the powers and abilities of the presidency. It identifies change in the office itself—from the weak, patrician, patronage-reliant presidency of the 1790s to the highly centralised and professionalised office two decades later. Presidential power

and institutional properties determine the strategies that leaders may employ to enact change. Skowronek's principal contribution, however, is describing the fundamental structures that transcend such developments. For Skowronek, presidents' levels of authority—the scope that other actors and institutions give presidents to act—are more important in determining their effectiveness than the formal powers they hold. In his analysis, chronologically distant presidents with similar levels of authority are more comparable than chronologically adjacent presidents with divergent authority levels, despite intervening changes in the power and institutional form of the presidency. The variation in authority structures is developed in what Skowronek calls the recurrent pattern. This defines the relative authority that presidents have to wield their competing impulses to shatter, create and affirm the political order.

Some presidents hold little authority to challenge the orthodoxy and the interests that seek to protect it, and thus achieve little change to the political order. Other presidents receive a warrant to shatter what came before and develop a new order. The recurrent pattern follows a cyclical version of time ('political time'), with regimes being created, maintained, then decaying and ultimately being superseded. Decay occurs when new issues and problems emerge which orthodox ideas can no longer solve; these ideas lose the support of the public and political elite. Finally, the regime crumbles, providing opportunities for astute leaders to propagate alternative ideas and create a new regime.

The term 'regime' is used to describe a wide variety of political phenomena, but here it describes bundles of ideas and institutions that shape political and policy behaviour. This definition seeks to explain actor behaviour beyond formal institutions (see Helmke and Levitsky 2004: 725–6). The key feature of regimes is not their degree of codification but their degree of acceptance—

regimes are necessarily very widely accepted and acknowledged norms that guide political behaviour (see Skaaning 2006: 9–11). For example, the persistent belief in Keynesian economics and social welfare policies in the post-war period within most western democracies constitutes a regime (or a paradigm', see Hall 1993).

In US politics, the authority structures that recur in political time are the product of the strength of the regime and how the president is positioned towards the regime. Presidents are either opposed to or affiliated with the prevailing regime and its ideas. Naturally, this is a somewhat crude characterisation; few leaders are entirely opposed to or affiliated with a particular regime. Yet Skowronek plausibly demonstrates that all presidents can be classified into these positions. Opposed presidents seek to shatter the regime and create a new order based on new ideas, while affiliated leaders seek to defend and strengthen the status quo.

The ideas that make up the established regime can either be vulnerable or resilient. Again, this will always be a matter of degree rather than an absolute, but generally it is clear (at least in retrospect) that a regime is one or the other. When a regime is resilient, the political order is ideologically, organisationally and institutionally well supported. When the regime is vulnerable, it represents an orthodoxy that has lost credibility, and no longer seems capable of managing emerging problems. Typically, when the nation is beset by problems that the regime cannot solve, the result is a crisis.

| Regime | Opposed leader | Affiliated leader |
|---|---|---|
| **Vulnerable** | Reconstruction | Disjunction |
| **Resilient** | Pre-emption | Articulation |

Table 1. Recurrent structures of Presidential Authority (Skowronek 1997: 36).

Leaders who oppose a weakened regime are reconstructors (see Table 1). The failings of the system are palpable and as such, presidents like Franklin Roosevelt gain large warrants for change, and forge new ideas and new arrangements to create a new regime. This situation affords leaders the capacity to shatter the political order and create a new one, which is the greatest authority to effect political change. Presidents who come to office affiliated and committed to the existing ideas and arrangements when the regime is resilient are termed articulators. Such presidents generally seek to maintain or strengthen the regime rather than make grand alterations. Changes made by these presidents are 'orthodox innovations'.

Presidents who are affiliated with a failing system occupy a position that is termed disjunction. These leaders can become trapped; some may recognise that the system is failing but lack the authority to repudiate it. Alternatively, they may be ideologically committed to the ideas of the regime, and by their own choice remain doggedly committed to it. Finally, pre-emptive leaders seek to repudiate the existing order or significant elements of it but their authority to do so is dampened by a resilient regime. Pre-emptors typically do not strike out against every element of the orthodoxy, but their leadership is characterised by major 'signature issues' on which they do make such efforts. These leaders are wild cards who fail to notice or to accept the limits to their authority and mistakenly believe that they have warrants to recreate the political system.

**Transplanting Skowronek: Political Regime Cycles in Australia**

Skowronek conceives of his first and most fundamental pattern, the 'persistent' pattern, as a product of the United States Constitution. He depicts the persistent pattern as 'built on what all presidents share by virtue of the formalities of the constitutional design' (Skowronek 1997: 12), and describes a

paradox in that 'the presidency is a governing institution inherently hostile to inherited governing arrangements' (Skowronek 1997: 20). Thus, it is the constitution that generates the conflicting impulses to 'order-shatter', 'order-create' and 'order-affirm'.

The constitution's limits on presidential action are further confused by its sharing of the responsibility and powers for governing among three co-equal branches. Article II of the US Constitution vests 'executive power' in the president, but gives no indication of what this allows the president to do (Rudalevige 2006: 507). By contrast, Article I only gives Congress the 'legislative powers herein granted'. This leaves a wide berth for differing interpretations of presidential power within the constitutional system, creating an ambiguity over its proper use, which has encouraged presidential power to accrue or diminish relative to the legislative branch according to presidents' political authority.

In practice, the presidency has become the focal point for the American polity and the symbolic centre of government. In spite of their limited formal powers, the public sees presidents as the principal leaders of American government and society (Rockman 1995). Thus presidents face simultaneous, competing demands to maintain legitimacy and authority. They must exercise the independent powers of the office on their own terms whilst reconciling the disruption and change this brings to the established order and received commitments they inherit. They must strike this balance in an environment where presidential powers are constrained and yet the dominating nature of the office is largely accepted.

Although Skowronek relies on the United States constitution and the specific institution of the American presidency to articulate this pattern, in a discussion of his book, he states that his intention was not to suggest the

tensions between order and change in executive leadership are uniquely American (Skowronek 1995). Similarly, Bert Rockman comments in a chapter on comparative executive politics that political time needs different indicators across political systems, but the basic concept has universal properties (Rockman 1995: 78, Young 1995).

Skowronek's persistent pattern identified a fundamental problem of governing through time, but America's formal institutions of government are not the sole root of the problem. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Skowronek's typology of leadership can suit a wide range of political contexts ('t Hart 2010: 8–11). The conflicting demands of legitimacy and authority are likely to manifest themselves similarly wherever executive and legislative power are made accountable to the public, and wherever competing reformist and conservative views flourish in society. This is especially true where one or other of these forces can gain majority control of the legislature and dominate the political arena.

Although Skowronek never identifies this, without the public competition of ideas the presidency would not hold its competing impulses. The clarity of the institutional distinction of these demands in the US likely makes the outcomes of their interaction with the fluctuation of authority through regimes more volatile. Thus we expect examples of the four types of leadership to be purer in the US than elsewhere. Outside the US, Skowronek's theory is most likely to work in Westminster nations like Australia with histories of strong executive leadership and two major parties, and least likely to work in consensus systems with histories of multi-party coalition governments that combine progressive and conservative forces within a single executive.

**Comparing Executives: President Vs. Prime Minister**

In Westminster systems the constitutional position of the prime minister is often vague. The UK lacks a written constitution, while the constitutions of those countries that do have one, like Australia, are silent on the roles of prime minister and cabinet (Rhodes et al. 2009: 87). Unlike US presidents, Westminster prime ministers sit in the legislature. This gives them both the executive abilities to oversee and maintain laws, and the legislative abilities to create and destroy them. Thus, the impulses of Skowronek's persistent pattern are immediately apparent, particularly in instances of single party government majorities. Prime ministers, with cabinet, can harness progressive or conservative ideas to shatter, affirm and create the political order, usually with greater freedom than US presidents.

While Westminster executives are usually more powerful against the legislature than US executives are, the position of prime ministers within the executive is weaker than that of presidents. The nature of prime-ministerial power is contested. Each major Westminster country has had enduring academic debates about the 'presidentialisation' of politics, in which prime ministers are said to have risen from first among equals status to be paramount in government through the centralisation of power and increasing media attention to leaders (Poguntke and Webb 2005, Walter and Strangio 2007).

An alternative 'core executive' understanding of Westminster government holds that a handful of influential ministers and advisers in various (somewhat fluid) configurations are most important in decision-making (Rhodes and Dunleavy 1995, Weller 2007). In Westminster countries, the prime minister's strength relative to cabinet has fluctuated depending on the leadership styles and interests of a prime minister, as well as on outside

factors such as wars and economic difficulties. Rhodes, Wanna and Weller contend that the most powerful prime ministers relative to their cabinets were First World War leaders, Britain's David Lloyd George, Canada's Robert Borden, and Australia's William Morris Hughes (2009: 102). This can be read as implicit support for Skowronek's theory, suggesting that the war-time context enhanced prime ministerial authority and this rather than a development of institutional power enhanced prime-ministerial strength.

Prime ministers are the most important figures in each of these conceptions. It is in their interest to be consultative within the executive in a way that US presidents do not need to be, as Westminster ministers have greater capacity to take decisions. But even for those who adhere to the core executive model, prime ministers 'will appear the dominant and decisive figure' (Weller 2007: 285). Certainly, among parties and the public 'leaders are looked upon as the transformative agents of politics' (Walter and Strangio 2007: 12). However, in terms of setting policy and implementing regime change, prime ministers commonly operate in tandem with their treasurers. Bob Hawke/Paul Keating, John Curtin/Ben Chifley, and John Howard/Peter Costello are prime examples of this phenomenon. Reinforcing the earlier argument, prime ministers have tended to be the agenda setters and symbolic leaders of reform, securing support with the electorate, whilst their treasurers have had more substantial roles in implementation.

Ministers in Westminster countries have greater independence than their US counterparts, giving prime ministers a greater need to compromise and discuss positions within cabinet. As Hargrove notes, the unitary nature of the US executive, and its separation from the legislature, gives it greater creativity (2001: 60). The president can overrule cabinet in a way that a prime minister cannot. This allows more scope for presidents to champion policies that would create drastic change, a consultative cabinet means that decisions are more

likely to be compromises and therefore less radical. Prime ministers never have an absolute monopoly on authority to shatter the political order and create a new one the way some presidents have had. We expect executive compromises to ensure that Australia provides less pure examples of prime ministers standing in opposition to the political orthodoxy as either reconstructors or pre-emptors.

In these two types of political systems, authority and power interact with similar consequences, but their locus and emphasis are different. This is particularly important with regards to authority—presidents and prime ministers build and require authority in different forums. Presidents primarily use the constitution and their own electoral mandates as major wellsprings of authority from which to build coalitions within the legislature and amongst partisan groups. By contrast, Australian prime ministers have no direct constitutional authority and only indirect electoral legitimacy, thus they must rely heavily upon primacy in the media and public popularity as sources of authority. Conversely, the prime minister commands far more power over the legislature than the US president does. But that power is ineffective if it cannot be coupled with the authority to exercise it. Prime ministers use authority to cement their position within their cabinet and party, and to deploy against opposition from both the bureaucracy and opposition parties. Both prime ministers and presidents are very much beholden to the effectiveness of their authority claims in order to build coalitions and advance agendas, but those claims have different origins and different patterns of use.

*The Executive and the Legislature: Congress and Parliament*

While the president is dominant within the American executive, the executive itself is not strong in comparison with the legislature. In part this is because of the way the two polities understand the executive. Compared to the US,

Australian political culture 'tolerates and is not unduly disturbed by executive power' (Hart 1992, 197). This difference is also institutionalised; the separation of powers in the US prevents the president from dominating Congress, but in Australia the prime minister heads both the executive and an extremely disciplined parliamentary party, meaning that the executive can have its legislation passed far more easily. Conversely, without a disciplined party to rely upon, presidents must painstakingly build supporting coalitions for each policy one at a time (Davis 1992: 13). The individual nature of their authority encourages US presidents to build support publicly and thus pressure the legislature into supporting their policies (Kernell 1993).

This is not to say that Australian prime ministers can pass whatever legislation they see fit. By virtue of an electoral system that favours the two major parties, the prime minister's party has held a majority of seats in the House of Representatives for all but a few brief periods since 1909. This coupled with near absolute party discipline on parliamentary votes means that it is usually easy for the Australian executive to have its legislation pass the lower house. The Senate is different, however, as the government typically does not hold a majority there. This makes bargaining necessary, either with the major opposition party or with minor parties that together (or alone) can help the government to pass bills. Presidents have neither the advantage of a guaranteed majority in one house of the legislature, nor of having strong party discipline to ensure that legislators will support them. This makes presidents more likely to suffer public failures, which in turn reduce their authority to make further changes.

*Institutionalised Opposition*

Another difference between the Australian prime minister's position regarding the legislature and the US president's is that the prime minister

faces an organised and institutionalised opposition. This is a mixed blessing for prime ministers. Party discipline makes the opposition ineffective legislatively (Kaiser 2008: 33) but legislative impotence leads the opposition to make direct appeals to the public, heightening the prominence of the opposition leader as an alternative prime minister (Reid and Forrest 1989: 62, Uhr 2009: 62). The opposition can capitalise on the mistakes of the government, damaging its public support and promoting its own leader as a ready-made, better alternative (Uhr 1992: 105). The contest between opposition and government is not an even battle, but the permanency of opposition leaders means they speak with more authority and legitimacy than forces opposed to the US president can.

Maddox notes that Australia's coherent single-party opposition is more legitimate in the eyes of the public than a fractured opposition would be (2005: 238). While this makes it easier for the opposition to attack the government, it also makes the opposition an easier target. Its alternative policies can be analysed and discredited, whereas an ad-hoc opposition is hard to define, let alone attack. As Robert Dahl famously observed of the US, 'to say where "the government" leaves off and "the opposition" begins is an exercise in metaphysics' (1966: 34). Presidents cannot afford to vigorously attack the opposition as opponents on one bill may be supporters on another. Overall, the opposition to the president is less effective in the public sphere, but more effective in practical terms than Westminster opposition. Given that each of these spheres has a significant effect on the leader's authority and power, the differing natures of opposition will likely mean that prime ministers approach problems in different ways from presidents, but this should usually have little net effect on the authority of the leader.

Different Westminster countries, with their variations on legislative-executive relations, will offer different opportunities and constraints that will increase or

diminish the independent power of prime ministers. Those with less power are less likely to create a set of policies that opposes the orthodox governing logic of the regime and less likely to succeed if they do, but prime ministers everywhere are unlikely to reach the depths of authority that presidents can. Prime ministers' power over parliament ensures that situations such as President Carter's inability to have the SALT II arms control treaty ratified by a Senate controlled by his own party would not be replicated in a Westminster system (Hargrove 2001: 55). This no doubt will change the outcomes of our application of Skowronek's theory to Australia and other Westminster countries. A prime minister whose authority has dissipated to a level comparable to that of Carter at the end of his presidency would likely still be able to get most major legislation through parliament in some form. Thus we expect that examples of disjunctive prime ministers will be less obvious failures than disjunctive presidents are.

*Executive Leaders and their Parties*

Compared to their prime-ministerial counterparts, US presidents enjoy 'enviable security of tenure' (Heffernan 2005: 58). Impeachment is the only mechanism for removing a president outside of elections. This can only be achieved by a legislative supermajority, and only when the president has committed 'high crimes or misdemeanours'. Prime ministers can be and are removed by their parties if their performance slips, particularly if the electoral prospects of the party decline. This is more common in Australia than other countries, although still quite rare, happening three times in the last forty years. However, the constant threat of removal requires that prime ministers respond to their parties' concerns. The difficulty of removing presidents increases the chances of prolonged and dramatic failures, whereas failing prime ministers are likely to be removed by a party nervous about its electoral prospects. This party accountability means that Westminster prime ministers

battle for authority with the parliamentary party to a much greater extent than US presidents, whose primary battle is with Congress as a whole. Furthermore, there is greater incentive for members of the Congress to act independently and against the president—the importance of position-taking and credit claiming with regards to their constituencies has made Congressional independence high and party-presidential unity low (see Mayhew 1974). The authority battle is more private in Westminster countries. If party members defeat prime ministers or force them to compromise on policy initiatives, this is unlikely to be publicised. Conversely, presidents whose legislation is rejected by Congress must cope with public failure and the inevitable compromise of popularity and authority that this involves. This potential for failures to beget more failures heightens the potential for dramatic losses of authority in the US, and thus clearer examples of disjunctive leadership.

*Term Limits*

A final relevant institutional difference between the two systems is that of tenure. American presidents are limited to a maximum of two four-year terms, whereas prime ministers can endure for as long as their parties and the public are willing to retain them. This likely creates two major differences. Second term presidents may more readily attempt to have legislation pushed through Congress, as they are conscious that it is their final chance to implement their desired projects and secure their historical legacies. This potentially sets up presidents for greater legislative failures in second terms, whereas prime ministers have less need to rush. Prime ministers must always consider their re-election, and that of their party. As such they are less likely to make radical departures, even if they are approaching a self-determined retirement. This also means prime ministers who are powerful within their parties are able to continue as prime ministers for extended periods while the nature of political

time changes around them. Thus we are more likely to see long-serving prime ministers change from one of Skowronek's categories of leadership to another.

Our institutional comparison of the US presidency and the prime ministership has consistently led to the expectation that the four leadership types Skowronek identified will be present in Australia in more moderate forms. Institutional differences are likely to prevent prime ministers from taking oppositional positions in some circumstances in which a president would do. They will also allow struggling prime ministers to achieve more than struggling presidents. Moreover, our examination of executive leadership has shown that the three competing impulses of the persistent pattern are present in Westminster prime ministers. There is every reason to believe that prime ministers possess the same drives to use their powers independently and to make new and lasting changes to national politics as presidents do. Similarly, there is every reason to believe that prime ministers are tempered in these desires by an impulse to uphold the received order.

**Prime Ministerial Leadership and Regime Dynamics in Australia**

Having examined some of the institutional and theoretical considerations of transplanting Skowronek's theory, we now apply it in a Westminster context. For this chapter, we have chosen three consecutive Australian prime ministers— Malcolm Fraser (1975–83), Bob Hawke (1983–91), and Paul Keating (1991–96). Examining these prime ministers allows us to show each of Skowronek's four recurring authority structures as they appear amidst these three leaders. Our cases are chronologically contiguous, allowing transitions in political time to be observed. Importantly, we are able to see the crumbling of one regime and the beginning of another. As the exploration of political time narratives is a long and complicated exercise for a single chapter, focusing on three recent and diverse cases is the best compromise for

demonstrating the breadth and power of political time theory whilst remaining as parsimonious and consistent as possible.

**Malcolm Fraser**

Malcolm Fraser's career up to his assumption of the Liberal Party leadership in 1975 had been nothing if not a study in fealty to the conservative regime of the Menzies era. It was a quality that saw his personal authority within the party and the nation wax and wane. In the late 1960s it was a liability—under Harold Holt and John Gorton a modernizing trend and a renewed emphasis on the 'small-l liberal' elements of the party (Horne 1980: 15, Brett 2003: 142, Moore 2010: 249) sidelined Fraser.

But Gough Whitlam's attempts to dramatically change the course of Australian politics were pre-emptive and the government's challenge to the economic orthodoxy proved disastrous (Hughes 1979). A 1974 exposition by Fraser called for Australia to return to the post-war liberalism of the Menzies era (Fraser and Simons 2010: 259–60). Stressing a return to orthodox principles and economic managerialism, Fraser won by a landslide at the 1975 election. He had read the political times well, and found the politics of his time called for orthodox innovation upon the established pattern, not the wholesale revolution of the Australian state that Whitlam had attempted. The public backed him overwhelmingly, giving Fraser extensive warrants to restore Australia economically, and also in foreign policy, social welfare, health and education, to an essentially pre-Whitlam orthodoxy (Camilleri 1979, Palmer 1979).

*Fraser as Articulator*

Articulators face a difficult balancing act—and Fraser particularly so. A fundamental problem of articulation is the need to stay the course whilst maintaining the majority coalition and assuaging underlying dissension

(Skowronek 1997: 41–2). As the 'highest authoritative source' and 'salesman' for the orthodoxy, Fraser initially did this well (Weller 1989: 175–213). However, the enviable majority delivered by his 1975 victory and the seemingly unquestionable mandate for this project masked the underlying vulnerability of the post-war economic consensus. The beginnings of this were evident in 1975 when Fraser showed himself to be a sceptic of the Keynesian orthodoxy (Brett 2003: 150). But any rejection of recent economic tradition by Fraser was rhetorical rather than actual. An interventionist at heart, he maintained protectionism, arbitration, managed exchange rates, strong government intervention in the market, and traditionalist approaches to foreign affairs and social welfare (Kelly 1992: 34–7). The first two terms of the Fraser government were a balancing act. Fraser was pragmatic, introducing moderate reforms to the economic regime like tax indexation, wage indexation and significant budgetary restraint (Hughes 1979: 37–49). Coupled with pragmatic reform in industrial relations, conservation, immigration and Aboriginal affairs; Fraserism was orthodox innovation that held 'restraint' as its by-word (Ayres 1987: 303), but nonetheless constituted a successful and appropriate response to the political context. His authority increased thanks to gradual economic recovery and his approach appeared successful into the early 1980s (Ayres 1987: 354).

The balancing act became increasingly difficult as the free-market neoliberal faction of the Liberal Party became larger, more influential, and more critical of Fraser (Brett 2003: 181–2). Fraser's capacity to control the party while maintaining the regime was weakening by the early 1980s. Articulators' projects fall apart if their regime no longer provides coherent solutions to emerging problems. The lack of solutions undercuts the articulator's authority, and gradually they shift from the authoritative voice of traditional reason to appear increasingly out of touch with new political realities. This is the

problem of disjunction—as difficulties emerge, the regime gradually loses credibility, the public withdraws support, and elites begin to build a coalition for a new regime.

*Shift to Disjunction*

The fundamental weakness of the regime became obvious by 1981. Though buoyed by resource investment and previously positive terms of trade, the Australian economic picture had ultimately been distorted by them. The resources boom collapsed amidst a gloomy international economy, culminating in a major economic crash in 1982. Unlike 1975–76 though, Fraser could not steer a path through the crisis as an ally of the governing orthodoxy. Elites were losing faith in the Keynesian regime, and a growing number within Fraser's government were now openly challenging the dominant economic ideas.

Disjunctive leaders may recognise the shifting political landscape but have little authority available to respond to the change. A major report by a blue ribbon committee on the future of the Australian economy in 1980–81 threw the problem into stark contrast—its findings captured the growing elite sentiment against interventionist government economics and proposed sweeping changes to government financial management. However, Fraser's position was difficult as he lacked a clear mandate from his own political allies, or other organised interests, to push for implementation. Indeed, as the economic crisis worsened into 1982, the Fraser government clung more tightly to orthodoxy in its response. The 1982 budget was a classic expansionary Keynesian budget that sought to stimulate the economy at the cost of deficit financing (Fraser and Simons 2010: 372). It brought Fraser into conflict with proponents of economic liberalism ('dries') within the party, such as Treasurer John Howard, who publicly disavowed the expansionary budgeting months

later. During the 1980s, elite opinion turned decisively against protectionism, but Fraser's commitment to the orthodoxy was such that he continued to defend it (Brett 2003: 164).

As the articulator of a successful regime, Fraser had few troubles maintaining a unified cabinet and party under the authority of stable continuity. When the regime became vulnerable and his position became one of disjunction, that unity crumbled. Fraser's waning authority gave rise to challenges from the party's dries. Industrial Relations Minister Andrew Peacock's resignation in 1981, and challenge to Fraser as leader in 1982, demonstrated that the prime minister's hold on the party was waning. Another blow came when Fraser's long-time deputy and ally Phillip Lynch, who had warded off a first challenge in 1980, was usurped by John Howard in 1982 (Weller 1989: 163–4). It was against this background of waning authority that Fraser and the regime he represented were rejected by the electorate in 1983; delivering a Labor government that would bring the major reform that Fraserism had not delivered (Brennan and Pincus 2002: 70–74).

That 'the defeat of the Fraser Government was the product of the weight of time' (Ayres 1987: 432) is a fitting summary of how Fraser fell from an enormous majority to crushing defeat in just seven years. In 1975 his affirmation of the political and economic orthodoxy was what the public desired after the chaos of the Whitlam government, yet underlying economic, industrial and social tensions in Australia resurfaced. At the end of the Keynesian regime, Fraser excelled at defending and maintaining the regime against increasingly strident criticism. Ultimately, his skill was no match for the shift in elite and public opinion that demanded a new era in the dominant ideology of government, and he became a prisoner of his own politics—no longer able to provide solutions to emerging problems, but also unable to repudiate the failing regime.

**Bob Hawke**

Bob Hawke's Labor Party won the 1983 election and he became prime minister at the perfect time for a reconstruction. The Fraser government and the regime it represented had crumbled and new economic ideas were available and being implemented in other parts of the world. However, Hawke was cautious and his reconstruction was gradual. He and Treasurer Paul Keating redesigned the Australian economy, abandoning protectionism and opening it up to the global marketplace. He had not campaigned on a platform of major economic change; the Labor election policy had advocated orthodox Keynesian solutions to save the economy from recession. Labor in opposition had attacked the idea of financial deregulation (Kelly 1992: 79). Unlike modern American reconstructors, Hawke did not seek rapid change—the economic failures of the previous Whitlam Labor government contributing to his careful approach (Hawke 1994: 145). Hawke's economic message altered slightly when the size of the projected deficit ($9.6 billion) became apparent. This figure reflected the fact that Fraser had already planned to add government stimulus to the economy and meant Hawke could reduce the deficit by cutting some planned expenditure, preaching austerity while still actually adding stimulus to the economy.

Hawke was uncharacteristically pragmatic for a Labor leader (Blewett 2000: 397), a style which separated his reconstruction from those of contemporaries like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, who showed greater commitment to monetarist reform and its neo-liberal ideology. Hawke was committed neither to this new logic, nor to the old Keynesian principles, which meant that Australia's reconstruction was slower and more centrist than most. Hawke did not ruthlessly slash the budget deficit, seeking to avoid the unemployment that a rapid spending reduction would cause (Kelly 1992: 60). His reconstruction was less the result of a master plan than the knock-on effect

of a series of independent policies, beginning with the decision to remove currency exchange controls.

Crucially for a reconstruction in a Westminster system, Hawke obtained significant authority within his party. He and Keating were able to implement policies that were previously unthinkable in the Labor Party (Willis, 2003: 140). Hawke government minister, Neal Blewett described Hawke's party relations in terms reminiscent of most reconstructive presidents; 'he was occasionally rebuffed, as in his first efforts to privatize the airlines and telecommunications in 1988, [but] defeats were rarely permanent' (2000: 399). His authority largely stemmed from his immense public popularity and a sense that he could communicate with the public better than alternative leaders, and was more likely to win elections (Moore 2010: 287).

*Policy Shift*

Hawke's national economic summit of April 1983 brought union and business leaders together to discuss a solution to the nation's economic problems. Most significant, was an 'Accord' with trade unions under the terms of which union leaders agreed not to push for higher wages, as long as government was able to compensate workers with 'social wage' improvements through tax cuts and improved social services. The Accord reflected Hawke's consistent preference for a consensus position, something that not all reconstructors seek, given their strong warrants to repudiate the orthodoxy. Hawke's method differed from Reagan's attempts to destroy the received order with ruthless cuts to departmental spending and confrontational strategies to deal with unions and other entrenched interests. It also differed from Thatcher's explicit rejection of the need for consensus. Hawke preferred to explain, to persuade and to allow all stakeholders to have input in the reconstruction process. As Orren and Skowronek contend, a successful reconstruction requires 'the accommodation

of important social interests opposed to the reform thrust of the regime-builders' (1998: 696). Hawke's inclusiveness ensured the ultimate success and longevity of his reconstruction but reduced his control over its design.

In 1983, Keating announced the floating of the Australian currency on the foreign exchange market. As Kelly notes, this decision 'transformed the economics and politics of Australia' and 'signalled the demise of the old Australia—regulated, protected, introspective' (1992, 76). Just as important though, was the deregulation of the financial sector that followed soon after. Controls on the banking sector were abolished and foreign banks were allowed into Australia. The Hawke government introduced the most extensive set of tax reforms since the previous reconstruction in the 1940s, instituting capital gains and fringe benefits taxes and reducing the top marginal tax rate by 13 per cent (Blewett 2000: 398). Tariffs were cut savagely in most industries. Protectionism, fundamental to the Australian economy since Federation, was essentially abandoned (Steketee 2001, Willis 2003: 152).

*Shifting to Articulation*

Reconstruction can only be temporary, Hawke established a new orthodoxy and inevitably shifted to a politics of articulation, seeking to operate within his new orthodoxy rather than continue to remake the political order. In such situations, other interests reclaim some of the authority that they had ceded during the emergency. Hawke's authority was directly attacked by economic events and by Keating. Hawke's control of the party was damaged by the early 1990s recession, which had amplified the disillusionment of Labor voters who had always been reluctant supporters of market-based economic reforms (Blewett 2000: 399). When his authority dropped, the party room's criticism of Hawke became louder and more pertinent. The party and much of the public considered Hawke's response to the recession to be inadequate. This was

crucial in encouraging caucus members to consider leadership change (Blewett 2000: 403).

Hawke's decline was exacerbated by the effect of opposition leader, John Hewson's "Fightback!" package. Hewson planned to continue and radically deepen the economic reforms started by the Hawke government, creating a purer neo-liberal economy. He proposed a further massive reduction in tariffs, sweeping labour market reform to encourage competitive practices and the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax (Abjorensen 1993: 194–5). Fightback! showed that Hawke's government had lost its reformist energy (Blewett 2000: 404). The prime minister had completed his shift to articulation, seeking to preserve his reconstruction against Hewson's Liberal Party. In this context Keating began to defeat Hawke's proposals in caucus. In 1991 he launched his two assaults on the party leadership, succeeding with his second challenge.

Hawke began his prime ministership with the towering authority to remake Australian politics that only a reconstructor is afforded. He persuaded his party to adopt policies that were anathema to Labor tradition and implemented the most sweeping economic change yet seen in one Australian prime ministership. However, once the majority of his reform agenda was implemented, his authority began to fade, his public popularity declined and his weaknesses became more obvious.

**Paul Keating**

Paul Keating's prime ministership is an example of pre-emptive leadership. Skowronek's pre-emptive leaders are characterised by their opposition to a resilient governing orthodoxy, this typically backfires as elites and institutions of government, or the public reject the leader and seek a return to routine politics. Pre-emptive leaders are usually not opposed to the entire regime, but their opposition to certain elements of it defines them (Skowronek 1997: 456).

Keating demonstrates this pattern. His economic policies were of articulation as he sought to consolidate the Hawke government's reform project, but his prime ministership will be best remembered for his attempt to change Australian culture. Keating sought the creation of an Australian republic, promoted a rapid increase in Australia's economic and political engagement with Asia and advocated reconciliation with Australia's indigenous population. Keating's visionary style better suited a nation-changing reconstructive project than a period of consolidation. However, the time for reconstruction was over, the Australian population was more concerned about the recession than the prospect of social change, and at the 1996 election Keating was rejected and the socially conservative John Howard returned Australia to the status quo.

*Economic Policy: Articulation*

Keating was disappointed to become prime minister after Labor's major reforms had already been implemented. As one of his economic advisers, John Edwards noted, 'nothing he could do now in economic reform could approach the significance and value of what he had been able to do in the 1980s' (1996: 514). His desire to be innovative was obvious, but he could never be anything but incremental in his economic policies (Cockfield and Prasser 1997: 99). This is unsurprising; as Hawke's treasurer, Keating was heavily involved in the design of the Hawke government's economic reforms and was a firm believer in them. Moreover, no prime minister at this time would have had the authority for radical economic reform.

The Keating government made important economic changes, but these were orthodox innovations rather than attacks on the now entrenched competitive market economy. Some of Keating's most important changes, such as the creation of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the

implementation of mandatory superannuation contributions, were the culmination of processes implemented during Hawke's prime ministership (Kelly 2009: 124–5). These were crucial steps in institutionalizing and safeguarding the regime. However, Keating's authority gradually waned as his policy focus became more ambitious. His 1993 election victory had been a rejection of the opposition, rather than an endorsement of his government, but Keating chose to interpret it as support for his agenda of equitable economic growth and Australian cultural independence (Edwards 1996: 515–16). Keating's overestimation of his warrant is typical of pre-emptive leaders, and it inevitably leads to their public rejection.

*Cultural Policy: Pre-emption*

Although Keating's economic policy was that of an articulator, his cultural policy opposed the resilient regime. Pre-emptive leaders seek 'to establish the distinctiveness of their course', usually through 'one particularly bold policy' or 'signature issue'. For President Bill Clinton, this was his health care policy (Skowronek 1997: 456), for Keating it was a sweeping cultural programme designed to 'redefine the nation' (Curran 2006: 257). He disliked Australia's historical reliance on others, particularly Britain, for cultural identity and strategic interest, and he sought to redefine history in terms that emphasised Australia's independence and maturity. In effect he repudiated the legitimacy of Australia's history (Kelly 2009: 152). However, Keating was opening cultural questions that most voters felt were already settled at a time when their priority was the continuing effects of the recession.

Keating was rejected as much for his dismissal of existing cultural ideas as for the content of his new policies. Individually these changes may have been acceptable to the Australian people but together they were not. There was little support for removing the bases of the national identity. Without

repudiating the existing national story, Keating could not have created a new and lasting story of his own. However, he lacked the warrant to shatter the cultural order, let alone to create a new one. Significantly, the economic reconstruction under Hawke had been largely supported by the Liberal opposition but this cultural shift never received bipartisan political support.

As a single component of this cultural policy, Keating's engagement with Asia was the biggest shift. Keating convinced President Bill Clinton to focus more on the Asia-Pacific region and participate in the first Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation leaders' meeting. This was a major success, as was his improvement of Australia's relationship with Indonesia. However, the Australian public remained unimpressed, and could not accept Keating's axiom that Australia should find its security 'in Asia', not 'from Asia' (Kelly 2009: 168). This idea challenged a century of Australian fear of outsiders, particularly outsiders from South-East Asia. Keating had failed to persuade the public that it needed to abandon this attitude.

Indigenous affairs policy also saw Keating advancing more quickly than public opinion. His famous Redfern speech in December 1992 saw him recognise publicly that 'we', meaning 'white Australia', are responsible for the worst problems that Aboriginal Australians have faced throughout their history. As Don Watson, who authored the speech noted, that word 'we' became problematic as it implied that the current generation of white Australians should feel guilt for the actions of past generations (2008: 291). It was difficult for people to accept Keating's version of the past and it was therefore difficult for many to accept his programme for the future. Keating vigorously supported the High Court's Mabo decision, which recognised indigenous land rights, and pressed ahead with native title legislation. However, his attempts to explain the importance of native title publicly met consistent responses of fear and resentment (Watson 2008: 381).

The US political system is designed in such a way that it encourages Congress to prevent presidents in opposition to a resilient regime from succeeding. In Australia, like many other Westminster countries, the blocking power of institutionalised opposition is often limited. In Keating's case, there was no institution or opposition in a position to rebuff his government. As a result, it was the electorate that displayed its discontent with Keating's preemption. As historian David Day stated, 'the electorate was unwilling to embrace the future that Keating held out for them. Instead, old prejudices resurfaced as Australians returned under John Howard to the apparent certainties of the past' (2000: 435). At a time when the public demanded stability and a focus on economic recovery, Keating misread his opportunities and offered a programme of major cultural change.

**The Politics Prime Ministers Make: Conclusions**

These three cases demonstrate that recurrent authority structures are present in a similar form for prime ministers as for presidents. Additionally, we can clearly see the collapse of one regime and the beginning of another. For many, Skowronek's model appears somewhat deterministic and overly structural (Arnold 1995, Wilson 1994), but in part this is because Skowronek did not explain the potential for different leaders to create different kinds of reconstructions, pre-emptions, articulations or disjunctions. There is significant room to move within each of these categories. For example, Hawke's cautious reform stands in stark contrast to the activity of the famous first hundred days of Franklin Roosevelt or a similar period of the Reagan revolution. This may reflect in part prime ministers' need to carry the support of cabinet as well as parliament, but it also reflects Hawke's stylistic penchant for consensus and gradualism.

The cases demonstrate that the output of the theory differs somewhat in Australia. Two of our prime ministers shift from one authority structure and leadership pattern to another during their term. This in part is made possible by the fact that Australia has no term limits, and long-serving prime ministers may be confronted by eventful exogenous changes altering the viability of the existing regime. During Fraser's government, for example, the Australian economy suffered a deep recession that catalysed a questioning of the orthodox Keynesian ideas to which he was affiliated. Likewise Hawke's four-term government had to adjust from its early years of reform to its later years of consolidation, a transition it struggled to come to terms with.

The Australian cases also provide us with an intriguing example of pre-emptive leadership. Pre-emptors are the least developed of the presidential types in Skowronek's work, largely because they are not essential for the perpetuation of the political time cycle. Keating's experience highlights that in Westminster systems too, the politics of pre-emption are a potentially lethal business for reformers who try to force their hand. Westminster-style pre-emptions are likely to be quite different from those that Skowronek describes, in that the public at elections rather than the institutional political elites would be responsible for halting the leaders' disruptions of political order. Keating's pre-emption is also intriguing for the fact that it centred on social and cultural policy, whereas the pre-emptions identified by Skowronek usually pertain to attempts to push the boundaries of the scope of government action. This reminds us that regimes are in large part about how a nation defines itself, and not just about the mechanics of public policy. This leads to questions of how much is really available for redesign when a disjunction occurs. If it is the entire national identity, then this could encompass many more policy areas than are traditionally recast. If it is only parts of the regime that are available for redesign, then this is an important consideration for reconstructive leaders.

The most important finding of this chapter is that Skowronek's political time theory can be usefully applied in a Westminster context. Our explorative attempt to do so for Australia has shown similar patterns of executive leadership at work as in the US, but the reasons for this are likely to be common to many other polities both in the Westminster tradition and outside it. It seems that this theory is likely to work wherever the executive leader is the main agent of change and an adversarial culture of conservative and progressive politics endures. Though variations between systems will inevitably result in changes in the way leaders are able to act, we believe those actions can be better understood through the lens of political time. Some groundwork for Skowronek's theory is in fact in place in Westminster scholarship. The existence of regimes and the importance of political context in determining leadership choices is not entirely new (Hall 1993, Studlar 2007, Johansson 2009). However, this is the first direct application of Skowronek's political time to a Westminster context. It demonstrates the exciting opportunities to bring together leadership and development theory to provide new ways to understand political history in these countries.

The successful transplant of this theory should serve as a reminder that there is a need to place greater emphasis on the context within which leaders act when evaluating their performances. Many of the leaders we consider failures were unfortunate in the times that they came to power and their authority to make politics were circumscribed by the wider political context. This is not to undermine the role of skill in leadership, but to remind those who would judge leaders that there is no level playing field. Even if one leader directly follows another, their authority levels can be divergent and the challenges they face can be so different that these leaders should be judged against different sets of criteria. Different skills and different leadership styles are more appropriate at different times. Skowronek's political time theory

provides the opportunity to bring context into the equation of leadership in many political systems, particularly those with Westminster traditions.

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Article 2

# Understanding the Success of Presidents and Prime Ministers: The Role of Opposition Parties

Brendan McCaffrie

*This article examines three examples of reconstructive leadership in the 1980s: Reagan in the United States, Thatcher in the United Kingdom, and Hawke in Australia. It finds three primary ways that opposition parties contribute to the success of reconstructive leaders. Firstly, oppositions contribute negatively to the success of presidents and prime ministers through ineptitude and internal division. Secondly, they assist government leaders through engagement with their ideas. Oppositions may agree with the ideas of government leaders, enhancing the leaders' ability to achieve their desired changes. On the other hand, they may disagree and potentially diminish leaders' success. When opposition parties fail to win elections it discredits their alternative ideas, often leading them to adopt government positions. This entrenches the government position, enhancing perceptions of leaders' success. Consequently, when government changes hands, new government leaders consolidate their predecessors' changes – the third way opposition parties aid reconstructive leaders. Thus, oppositions contribute to the implementation of leaders' programmes and to their legacies, two crucial elements in assessing leaders' success.*

Scholars of political leadership have long struggled with how best to understand successful political leadership. Typically, such efforts focus on leaders as independent actors and undervalue the contributions of other actors and institutions in the political system, ignoring the role of parliamentary and congressional opposition. Leaders do not affect all political outcomes ('t Hart

2011), and even at their most influential, they are still restrained by the political system and actors within it. This article seeks to demonstrate that opposition parties significantly contribute to government leaders' success. Successful leaders have often received support from opposing parties, helping them to make greater reforms and enhancing their legacies, and perceptions of their success. Naturally, oppositions also act to diminish perceptions of government leaders, but this article focuses on the less common, positive side of the relationship between oppositions and government leaders.

Within the political leadership literature, rankings exercises are the most common approach to evaluating leaders. However, whether these actually measure success is questionable. In their rankings of leaders, experts tend to highlight either leaders' characteristics or the context in which they led (Curry and Morris 2010, McCann 1992, Nice 1984). However, their understanding of what successful leadership is remains implicit. Dean Simonton's model explains early all of the variation in United States' (US) presidential rankings (1991), but his six factors[3] are not directly based on performance or results (Curry and Morris 2010). This suggests that rankings explain something other than success, likely reflecting the rankers' preferences. Nonetheless, they are useful as a guide to expert perceptions of leaders.

Allan McConnell observed that success is by definition outcomes based (2010). Thus most theoretical approaches to leadership success have emphasised active leadership that creates societal change and substantial legacies. James MacGregor Burns' notion of transformational leadership privileges leadership that invokes change in society, particularly through the development of followers (Burns 1978, see also Lord 2003, 18–19). Erwin C. Hargrove placed US presidents into three categories: preparation, achievement and

[3] The six factors are tenure in office, scandal, assassination, being a war hero, leading during war years, and intellectual brilliance.

consolidation. Presidents of achievement are those who enact major reforms (1998, 62). For Richard Neustadt (1980, 147–48), the accomplishment of a course of action or 'purpose' and the legacy left for successors are two factors among four.[4] Legacy is particularly important given that we understand success retrospectively (Rockman 1984, 187–94). The greater a leader's legacy, the more it influences the present day and merits positive assessments.

Stephen Skowronek (1997, 27–8) focused on context, contending that the leaders we consider most successful are those who had greater authority to use the powers of their office as a result of national circumstances. 'Reconstructive' leaders have the most authority. They respond to a crisis that threatens the existing logic of government action and create a new 'regime' based on a new logic (Skowronek 1997, 36–9). For example, Roosevelt responded to the Great Depression and created a regime based on New Deal social measures and Keynesian economics. Reconstructive leaders contend with great challenges, create great change and leave substantial legacies. This is not the only way to be considered successful, although it is the most common. Reconstructive leaders routinely rate at or near the top of rankings tables and are highly representative of current theoretical understandings of successful leadership. Skowronek's patterns of authority also operate in 'Westminster' countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. Experts in these countries also rank reconstructive leaders among their most successful leaders, including Clement Attlee and Margaret Thatcher in the UK, and John Curtin, Ben Chifley and Bob Hawke in Australia (Gordon and Grattan 2004, Theakston and Gill 2011).

This article examines three examples of reconstructive leadership in the 1980s: Ronald Reagan's in the US, Thatcher's in the UK and Hawke's in Australia. It finds three primary ways that opposition parties contributed to the success of

[4] The other two factors are sensitivity to the effects of power, and coping with pressure.

these leaders. The first is ineptitude. During reconstructions, oppositions are typically hampered by association with recent failure when in government and divided over their parties' future directions. This usually ensures ineffective opposition, improving the chances of government leaders winning elections and convincing the public of policy changes. Secondly, oppositions assist government leaders through engagement with their programmes. They may accept proposed changes or oppose them. Those that oppose a reconstruction can damage government leaders but they rarely succeed. Naturally, it is easier for government leaders to pass legislation and convince the public when oppositions accept their changes. Finally, oppositions aid reconstructive leaders by later consolidating their programmes when in government. If leaders' policy changes were quickly overturned, their legacies would diminish, as would assessments of their success.

### The Government–Opposition Relationship and Policy Outcomes

Institutional accounts of government–opposition relations, particularly those examining majoritarian systems, have tended to assume that governments simply ignore oppositions. However, oppositions expend enormous energy critiquing and attempting to change government policy (Kaiser 2008: 34). It is unusual for governments to completely ignore their opponents as there are strong incentives to listen (Helms 2008: 14). Oppositions can improve policies by suggesting amendments to legislation and participating constructively in committee processes. Governments may also respond to opposition criticism to avoid potential damage. Sometimes this involves adopting part or all of an opposition policy (Seeberg 2011). Occasionally oppositions can set the agenda, raising public awareness of issues and forcing government action. Oppositions may also have unintended effects on government policy as governments tailor policies to divide opinion within opposition parties, or deliberately design

policies at variance with opposition preferences (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994, 91).

The interplay between government and opposition affects positive and negative perceptions of government leaders. The relationship may improve policy, but oppositions can also highlight policy mistakes and encourage a public perception of government failure. Occasionally, the relationship between government and opposition can be improved by friendship between senior members of opposing parties. In Australia, Treasurer Paul Keating and Shadow Treasurer John Howard developed such a friendship during the early years of the Hawke government, based on a shared understanding of the Treasury portfolio and the need for economic reform. It was short-lived, but helps explain Howard's acceptance of many Keating initiatives (Errington and Van Onselen 2007, 104–05). Some US Congressional leaders have developed similar interactions with presidents from the opposing party. Democratic House Speaker Sam Rayburn and Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson developed a supportive working relationship with Republican President Dwight Eisenhower, allowing Eisenhower greater legislative success than could have been expected.

**Case Selection**

This article examines the British Labour opposition to Thatcher, the Australian Liberal–National coalition opposition to Hawke, and the US Democratic opposition to Reagan. In the US, the Democrats' majority in the House of Representatives meant opposition was focused there. However, during presidential election campaigns, the Democratic candidates Walter Mondale (1984) and Michael Dukakis (1988) effectively led the opposition. The relationship between government leaders and oppositions is varied and complex. It is beyond the scope of this study to examine it in its entirety.

Rather, the article explores the contribution of institutionally and politically weak oppositions to government leaders' success. If these weak oppositions can have such influence then we can also expect stronger oppositions to do so.

While Reagan, Thatcher and Hawke are not routinely considered their countries' greatest leaders, there are significant advantages to using these examples. They began reconstructive change almost simultaneously. The changes were similar, involving a reduction in government intervention in the market economy in response to the problem of stagflation. Australia's Liberal Party was a centre–right opposition, and tended to agree with Hawke's reforms, whereas the centre–left US Democratic and British Labour oppositions instinctively sought to prevent the Reagan and Thatcher reconstructions. These cases allow us to examine different opposition responses to similar situations.

There is much to be gained by examining opposition relationships with non-reconstructive leaders, but for the purposes of this article, it is sufficient to examine the category most commonly associated with success. If oppositions can influence perceptions of these strongest government leaders, we can assume that they influence weaker leaders. Although these oppositions generally failed, each had some successes. Thus these cases include the relationship between an ascendant opposition and a struggling government leader.

The purpose of identifying opposition contributions to government leadership success is well served by examining adversarial rather than consensual democracies. If oppositions with limited institutional strength affect the success of presidents and prime ministers, then it is reasonable to expect that oppositions with strong legislative veto powers will also do so, although the nature of this influence will differ.

Opposition in majoritarian systems encompasses significant variation (Uhr 2009). Much of this is explained by differences in the institutional opportunities of oppositions (Helms 2004). The UK opposition could not halt Thatcher's legislative programme while the Conservatives retained party discipline. In Australia, Hawke's government lacked a Senate majority, giving the Liberal opposition some opportunity, in conjunction with minor parties, to prevent bills from passing. However, minor parties could negotiate with the government to ensure legislation passed. In the US, the opposition task was different because of its separation of powers system. US legislators are not alternative executive leaders, but Congressional Democrats shared many of the goals and behaviours of a parliamentary opposition party (Mann and Ornstein 2008, 13). The Democrats' institutional opportunities were greatest, given they held a majority in the House of Representatives and, after 1986, also in the Senate, although difficulties in maintaining party discipline made organising opposition difficult.

**Contribution 1: Inept Opposition**

Often analyses of reconstructive prime ministers dismiss their political opponents as weak or inept. Eric Evans described British Labour as having 'saddled themselves' with Michael Foot, a leader who was 'unelectable' (1997, 22). Dennis Kavanagh considered Labour's opposition to Thatcher to be 'ineffective' (1989, 97), while Geoffrey Fry stated: 'If Foot had been the worst Labour Leader since Lansbury, Kinnock . . . proved to be the second worst' (2008, 35). Similarly, in Australia, Paul Kelly (2008, 101) wrote that Liberal leadership contenders Andrew Peacock and John Howard were 'two relatively uninspiring options'. After Howard's first term as opposition leader (1985–89), Kelly (2008, 228) considered Howard's 'ability as a politician did not match the historic objectives he sought'. In retrospect, this judgement seems harsh. Howard's 11-year prime ministership revealed a competent politician. This

later success reflects his learning from mistakes (Errington and Van Onselen 2007), but also that he led the opposition at a difficult time.

*Opposition Associated with Past Failures*

The government leaders studied here each benefited from an opposition associated with recent failure in government. Reconstructive leaders necessarily take office during crises in which governing orthodoxies have failed. Publics blame prior government leaders and their parties for those failures. Previous leaders Jimmy Carter, James Callaghan and Malcolm Fraser were blamed for economic downturns that proved unresponsive to orthodox Keynesian solutions. Each struggled with disputes within their parties over whether a different approach was necessary (Fraser and Simons 2010, 373, Skowronek 1997, 404–06, Theakston 2003, 94).

For some opposition leaders the association with failure was personal. Walter Mondale, Carter's Vice President, sought throughout his own presidential campaign to distance himself from Carter, claiming to have privately opposed his unpopular decisions (Lynn 1984). In Australia, Hawke used the previously unannounced, surprisingly large budget deficit to undermine the economic credibility of Fraser's Liberal government. This damaged Howard, Fraser's Treasurer, hurting the Liberals when he was Peacock's Shadow Treasurer and later when he was leader. All governments attempt to discredit their rivals, but it is simpler when the public blames the opposition for continuing economic problems. This also makes it easier for governments to win elections, a necessary precondition of leadership success.

*Party Divisions*

Each of these opposition parties developed divisions during the end of their unsuccessful periods of government. Failure to solve economic problems led some party members to advocate alternative methods while others argued that

old methods should be better applied. Once these parties lost government, uncertainty about future directions intensified. In 1981, Speaker Thomas P. 'Tip' O'Neill identified seven different groups within the House Democrats working independently to devise responses to Reagan's programme (Farrell 2001, 551). Most of these groups had little lasting impact. Liberal Democrats, who believed Carter's conservatism caused his failure, still dominated the party.

They argued the Democrats should return to the ideas of the New Deal and vigorously oppose Reagan (Farrell 2001, 544). However, there was a small conservative element of the party that supported the President's programme, either because they believed Keynesianism had failed or because his popularity in their constituencies threatened them (Stockman 1986, 222). Most opposed Reagan once his popularity diminished, yet particularly during 1981, the Democrats' divisions worked in Reagan's favour. Within the Australian Liberal Party, Malcolm Fraser's refusal to break with Keynesian orthodoxy frustrated the party's 'dries', who believed in a pure form of economic liberalism (Henderson 2003). Howard became the dries' champion, but Peacock was an ideological chameleon. In 1981 and 1982 Peacock called himself a dry to build support for a leadership contest against Fraser, though his commitment to such ideas was questionable. He became opposition leader in 1983, defeating Howard largely due to superior public presentation skills and because the dries lacked the numbers to give Howard victory (Errington and Van Onselen 2007, 102). As leader, Peacock generally avoided taking sides between wets and dries but this satisfied neither, fuelling tensions (Kelly 2008, 119).

The 1984 election heralded significant changes in personnel and increasingly the dries dominated the party room. This did not reduce friction over the leadership. Howard remained a destabilising influence throughout Peacock's

leadership, complaining that the party lacked philosophical clarity (Errington and Van Onselen 2007, 118–19). When Howard became leader, Peacock was equally destabilising. Furthermore, minority elements within the party attempted to draft unlikely candidates like Queensland Premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen and Victorian businessman and party president, John Elliot. The Bjelke-Petersen push was especially divisive, creating a rift between the Liberals and junior coalition partner, the Nationals. Opposition divisions contributed to a sense of ineptitude, giving Hawke an advantage.

Of these oppositions, British Labour suffered most from division. Callaghan's repositioning of the party outraged its left wing, which saw him as ineffective and a betrayer of Labour tradition (Shaw 2000, 112). The left was outnumbered within the parliamentary party, but dominated branch membership and used this strength to make party procedures more democratic. This included replacing parliamentary caucus election of leaders with an electoral college system representing party members, unions and parliamentarians. Labour MPs battled among themselves to the detriment of the party, resulting in Michael Foot's surprise election as party leader in 1980. Callaghan resigned before the party could adopt the electoral college, attempting to secure the leadership for fellow right-wing member, Denis Healey (Fry 2008, 32). Foot, from the left, was only elected because at least five members of the right voted for him to sabotage the party (Shaw 2000, 114).

The increasing dominance of Labour's left, and its increasing ideological distance from the right, led a small group to defect and form the Social Democratic Party (Crewe and King 1995, 25–6). The group joined with existing third party, the Liberals, to form 'the Alliance'. This amalgam seized votes from Labour, receiving 25.4 per cent of the vote at the 1983 general elections, just short of Labour's 27.6 per cent. This fracturing, not just of Labour but of the left-wing vote, ensured Thatcher's electoral success.

**Contribution 2: Opposition Positioning**

Oppositions can affect the outcomes of reconstructions. Obviously, government leaders are less successful if oppositions prevent their reconstructive changes. However, the positioning of oppositions can also assist reconstructive leaders. This happens in two ways. One is accommodation, in which oppositions shift from opposing reconstructions to accepting major elements of them. Accommodation legitimises and entrenches a policy shift. Oppositions can also agree with the reconstruction from the outset, simplifying the passage of legislation and helping to convince the public of its benefits.

*Foot's Total Opposition*

In the UK, Foot's Labour opposition responded to Thatcher's reconstruction with total opposition. Previously, Callaghan had based his opposition more on the scope and speed of Thatcher's changes than on their direction. He and deputy leader Healey argued, for example, that exchange controls should have been relaxed rather than abolished (McRae 1979), and urged the government to be less doctrinaire in budget cuts (Ballantyne 1980). However, the growing influence of the left ensured that Labour's opposition became dogmatic.

The Labour manifesto for the 1983 election promised to overturn the Thatcher reconstruction by renationalising privatised industry, reintroducing exchange controls, repealing Thatcher's industrial relations changes, increasing social spending and reducing unemployment. The public disliked Thatcher's government initially as the number of unemployed reached unprecedented levels. However, anti-Thatcher sentiment tended to increase support for the Alliance, not Labour. Thatcher, with assistance from the conservative press, successfully painted Labour as extreme. Although Thatcher's programme was extensive and divisive, her government appeared more moderate and

pragmatic than Labour. By the time of the elections, substantial economic improvement diminished support for Labour's plans to overturn Thatcher's programme.

Oppositions with no institutional opportunities to block government programmes can only diminish reconstructive leadership success by offering the public better alternatives. This required stronger presentation skills than Foot possessed. His advanced age, untidy appearance and verbosity contributed to terrible television performances (Jones 1994, 498).

*Mondale's Total Opposition*

Before the 1984 presidential election, Reagan's campaign team was delighted that he was running against Walter Mondale, a committed liberal Democrat (Hunt 1985, 131–32). Like Foot, Mondale struggled with a campaign platform of staunch opposition in an improving economy. Inflation and unemployment had eased, vindicating the President's programme. Mondale's economic focus was the increasing deficit, a difficult issue on which to capitalise, especially as his strategy included a tax increase that Reagan argued was unnecessary (Klott 1984). This, along with Mondale's pledges to create additional social welfare schemes, saw Reagan label Mondale's programme 'higher taxes, more bureaucracy and a bigger welfare state' (quoted in Raines 1984).

Mondale's enormous loss, winning only Washington DC and his home state of Minnesota, further discredited New Deal liberalism. American political discourse favoured Reagan's small government, free market approach. It is unlikely that Mondale would have won the election by accepting large parts of Reagan's programme. However, such profound failure as the candidate of liberalism discredited this path for subsequent Democratic presidential candidates and encouraged them to take a more centrist approach.

*The Democrats in Congress: Total Opposition with Institutional Opportunity*

As Speaker of the House of Representatives when the Democrats had a majority there but not in the Senate, O'Neill effectively led the party for most of Reagan's presidency. He radically increased his media exposure, appearing more frequently than any previous Speaker (Harris 1998, 196–200). A committed New Deal liberal, O'Neill opposed Reagan's reconstruction, but unlike UK and Australian opposition leaders he could summon the numbers from his own party to block Reagan's legislation.

O'Neill's problem was Reagan's popularity. This increased after he survived an assassination attempt in March 1981. In the first months of his presidency, Reagan supported the budget proposal introduced by conservative Democrat Phil Gramm and Republican Del Latta, that aimed to drastically cut spending and taxes. Despite O'Neill's objections he acquiesced, believing the people wanted Congress to support the President (Tolchin 1981). He reasoned that he would fail to block the popular President's favoured bill, so instead he would make Reagan responsible for any negative consequences (Farrell 2001, 558). O'Neill supported the House Budget Committee's proposed budget, but Reagan, confident the Gramm–Latta bill would pass, did not compromise. Reagan enjoyed similar success in a July 1981 vote on major tax cuts.

The economic slump that began in late 1981 and continued into 1983 damaged Reagan's public standing, emboldening the Democrats to oppose his policies and pass their own bills. The President had no effect on the budget bill of 1982 (Kernell 1986) and in the following years was forced to accept tax increases on gasoline and pay roll tax to allow for greater social security spending. This greatly reduced the effect of his earlier tax cut (Wilentz 2008, 148–49, 169). These setbacks devastated Reagan's legislative programme. There were sporadic achievements such as the Tax Reform Act of 1986, but Reagan was unable to achieve his desired spending cuts, and was ultimately responsible for a ballooning federal deficit. Nevertheless, he was credited with the

economic recovery that began in 1983 and his rhetorical skill created a new logic in which 'big government' was anathema with both public and Congress. Naturally, this required public persuasion, and as Kane and Patapan reminded us, this occurs in a competitive environment (2010, 382). But O'Neill and other Democratic leaders could not match the President's performance. Halting legislation alone cannot defeat reconstructions.

Oppositions must defeat government leaders rhetorically to prevent them from altering the logic of government. In cases of total opposition, government leaders are assisted by oppositions' failure. Successes like the legislative achievements of the Congressional Democrats diminished perceptions of Reagan's leadership, but the inability of opposition leaders to rhetorically and electorally defeat Thatcher and Reagan allowed each success in their reconstructions.

*Australian Liberals: Opposition Agreeing with a Reconstruction*

Unlike the other oppositions examined here, the Liberals helped Hawke significantly from the outset by agreeing with his reconstruction. The dries' numerical superiority meant the Liberals championed small government and free market ideas similar to those the government implemented. Hawke's first major policy shift was to float the currency and abolish exchange controls. Speaking for the opposition, deputy leader Howard stated, 'it will prove to be a very intelligent and correct decision' (quoted in Mockridge and Kelly 1983). The parties retained differences. Most notably, the Liberals advocated a market-based, rather than centrally arbitrated wage system. Labor could never support this.

Throughout the 1984 election campaign Peacock avoided mentioning his party's sweeping economic liberalisation programme. Instead, he campaigned negatively, accusing Hawke of leniency towards organised crime and of

associating with criminals. He opposed the government's assets test for retirement pensions and its 30 per cent tax on lump sum superannuation payments, despite support for these policies from the economic liberals he represented (Errington and Van Onselen 2007, 114). Peacock's campaign was effective, and Labor won the election less convincingly than expected. This showed that a well-conducted negative campaign can damage government leaders and, potentially, retrospective judgements of their success.

Liberal agreement with the direction of the reconstruction meant that the government was not heavily criticised for some failures. In 1985, Howard convinced Shadow Cabinet to support Treasurer Paul Keating's proposal for a consumption tax. Peacock wished to oppose it and accused his Shadow Treasurer of being too helpful to Keating. Given Keating's failure to gain support from business, unions, community groups, and ultimately from Hawke, Liberal opposition to it would likely have damaged the government. In September 1985, Howard became opposition leader, assisting Hawke in two ways. While most opposition leaders would have struggled against Hawke's personal popularity, Howard was a weaker media performer than Peacock.

Hawke's other advantage was Howard's ideological commitment to a more extreme economic liberalisation. This allowed Hawke to make major reforms while appearing moderate and electable. This echoed Thatcher's advantage over the ardently left-wing version of British Labour in the early 1980s. After the failure of his consumption tax, Keating announced a compromise tax reform package. Howard opposed its capital gains tax but not its other measures, again allowing the government to make substantial changes with minimal resistance. Howard's approach suited the situation when Keating admitted in 1986 that Australia was heading for economic disaster unless it reformed its practices.

The business community, unions and media thought Hawke's response inadequate and government popularity dropped (Short 1986). This allowed Howard to promote his economic liberalisation programme as the solution. For several months, the government appeared to borrow policy from Howard, particularly his more moderate workplace relations ideas (Steketee 1986). Liberal leadership tensions resurfaced and Howard's ascendency evaporated. When Hawke called the 1987 election his opponents fought among themselves.

Divisions over Bjelke-Petersen's attempt to become Prime Minister saw the Liberals and Nationals fighting the election separately rather than in their usual formal coalition. The Liberal campaign proposed sweeping tax cuts designed to appease the coalition's natural supporters, such as business groups and farmers (Errington and Van Onselen 2007, 132). Howard thought the tax cuts economically unwise and polling showed that the electorate doubted they could be delivered (Kent 1987). These implausible promises as well as Liberal disorganisation reduced pressure on the Hawke government to alter policy.

Disunity also damaged the Liberals' 1990 election campaign. In 1989 Peacock regained the leadership in a 'palace coup' led by a small group of frontbenchers (Warhurst 1990, 9). The schadenfreude of those who deposed Howard left bitterness among his supporters and harmed public perceptions of the party. Peacock continued the Liberal push to deepen the reconstruction. He proposed spending cuts, restrictions on unemployment benefits, changes to monetary policy aimed at reducing inflation, increased privatisation and industrial relations reforms. Hawke Labor sought to minimise discussion of economic policy during the campaign, while the Liberals floundered in attempting to replace the public health insurance scheme, Medicare, without disadvantaging people who relied on it.

The opposition's divisions and policy failure again ensured Hawke's victory. His government remained the centrist party, advocating the retention of Medicare and new but less punitive restrictions on unemployment benefits. This ability to be a reform leader without appearing extreme was crucial to Hawke's success in convincing the public of his government's reforms throughout his prime ministership. It owed much to the opposition's engagement with the Hawke government's ideas.

*Kinnock's Accommodation*

Those parties that initially practised total opposition to government leaders gradually came to agree with the ideas of their reconstructions. After its 1983 election defeat, British Labour elected Neil Kinnock as leader. Kinnock was from Labour's soft left, and was initially supportive of total opposition, advocating the renationalisation of industry and opposing Thatcher's policies on taxation, social security and industrial relations. His position on each of these issues changed as part of a 'gradual acceptance of much of the Thatcher agenda' (Kavanagh 1997, 224).

The 1987 election loss and the left's dwindling influence within the party allowed Kinnock and other modernisers to accelerate this process. After Kinnock made Tony Blair Employment Spokesman in 1989, they pledged to retain most of Thatcher's industrial relations legislation (Shaw 2000, 128). The party came to accept that Keynesian policies were no longer tenable, or at least too problematic to re-impose. Kinnock Labour decided to join the European Community's Exchange Rate Mechanism, guaranteeing a low inflation strategy similar to Thatcher's. There were limits to the policy agreement. Labour opposed the government's privatisation of various industries as well as Thatcher's 1988 tax cuts, which Kinnock thought inequitable.

Labour's shift vindicated Thatcher's reconstruction but also made the opposition a greater electoral threat. Kinnock's opposition to Thatcher's unpopular Community Charge or 'Poll Tax' gave Labour a significant lead in the polls. In February 1990 Labour led by 15 points and Kinnock was preferred Prime Minister. Labour led throughout that year (UK Polling Report 2011). Undoubtedly, this was significant in the Conservatives' removal of Thatcher from the leadership, although discontent with her personal style and policy disagreements within the party also contributed. Labour's shift had both positive and negative effects on perceptions of Thatcher's leadership.

*Dukakis' Accommodation*

Republicans successfully attacked liberalism throughout the 1980s, causing many Democrats to disown the term. Presidential candidate of 1988, Michael Dukakis, presented himself as a conservative Democrat (Gray 1989, 253). Economic issues were less prominent in this campaign than most, but Dukakis proposed spending cuts to reduce the federal debt and, without making direct promises, sought to avoid the impression that he would raise taxes (Natoli 1988). His effort to appear neither as a liberal, opposed to Reagan's policies, nor as a Republican aligned with them, saw Dukakis stress competence rather than ideas. The Democrats titled their unusually short platform document, 'The Restoration of Competence and the Revival of Hope'.

Dukakis' unashamedly liberal nomination opponent, Jesse Jackson, ensured that Dukakis could not avoid association with liberalism. While Dukakis never directly repudiated Reagan, Jackson accused the President of abandoning the poor. Jackson's strong party following ensured that the platform became an incoherent compromise between his economic justice message and Dukakis' competence message (Smith 1992, 534). Dukakis lost the election by a large margin, allowing Bush to consolidate Reagan's reconstruction. Dukakis'

accommodation meant that as President, he too would have consolidated the Reagan programme.

**Contribution 3: Consolidating Reconstructive Leaders' Legacies**

Successors to Reagan, Thatcher and Hawke secured their changes. As Rose and Davies (1994, 116) noted, this was to be expected. Governments of long duration naturally leave stronger legacies than short-lived governments, especially as government policies are effectively confirmed by the public at elections (Heffernan 2002, 746). Many of the changes these leaders introduced would be difficult to remove even if subsequent leaders tried. To renationalise recently privatised industries would be costly, especially as the revenue from the sales had already been used (Rose and Davies 1994, 47). The popularity of tax cuts makes them hard to reverse. Such factors are important, but Thatcher's, Reagan's and Hawke's legacies are greater than the policies they instigated. Each led a shift in the ideas that dominated their national politics. The general acceptance of these ideas by the opposition parties, at least by the time they returned to government, ensured a continuation of the new approach.

*Consolidating Thatcher's Legacy*

John Major's prime ministership consolidated Thatcher's legacy. Major followed her trajectory largely because he lacked a distinct vision. He fought rising inflation and interest rates, sought to reduce government borrowing, and increased privatisation (Theakston 2003, 108). Labour continued its accommodation to Thatcher's regime throughout Major's prime ministership. Blair, leading Labour from 1994, accelerated its modernisation and conservative economic policy shift. Under Blair, Labour announced it would match the Conservatives' spending plans for its first two years in government and would not raise personal income taxes for its first term.

The extent to which Blair's government represented a continuation of Thatcherism is contested (see Beech 2008, 6–7, Gray 2004). While Blair Labour increased social spending, it imposed market mechanisms on social service providers to increase their efficiency (Gray 2004, 39). Blair's government had different priorities from Thatcher's, but followed a similar logic. Certainly, Blair did not attempt to overturn the major elements of Thatcherism, thereby enhancing Thatcher's legacy and perceived success.

*Consolidating Reagan's Legacy*

The next Democratic President, Bill Clinton, rejected the liberal label in favour of 'third way' politics, seeking a middle ground between conservative 'small government' and liberal ideas. Clinton advocated numerous measures in opposition to the Reagan reconstruction but these generally failed. Republicans blocked his fiscal stimulus bill with a filibuster, and his attempts to increase spending on education, job training, public works and health care met a similar fate (Edwards 1998, 755).

In the 1994 Congressional elections, a disciplined Republican party made Clinton, taxes and big government major election issues and won majorities in both the House and Senate. Clinton became far less legislatively active, and did little to attack Reagan's legacy. Privately, he complained that he was an 'Eisenhower Republican' (Crockett 2002, 187). He reluctantly accepted Reagan's influence, acknowledging in his 1996 State of the Union Address that: 'The era of big government is over.' This concession enhanced Reagan's legacy. Thus, Clinton made a vital contribution to positive appraisals of Reagan's presidency.

*Consolidating Hawke's Legacy*

In April 1990, after Peacock's second opposition leadership, the Liberals elected John Hewson, whose commitment to neoliberalism was even stronger

than Howard's. Hewson's policy programme, Fightback!, advocated further sweeping reductions in tariffs, labour market reform to encourage competition, a consumption tax, a rapid increase in privatisation and maintenance of extremely low inflation. The government's support plummeted as the nation slipped into a recession and Hawke proved unable to counter Fightback! This created the conditions for Keating to challenge and depose Hawke as leader. In this way, Hewson's programme damaged assessments of Hawke's leadership.

Keating became Prime Minister after his economic vision had been implemented (Edwards 1996, 514). Having been influential in designing and implementing the Hawke government reforms, his prime ministership naturally consolidated that programme. He introduced the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, designed to prevent anti-competitive business practices, and removed compulsory arbitration in employment agreements. Liberal opposition to Keating came in two phases: firstly, Hewson's accelerated reform drive, which halted after Keating's surprise victory at the 1993 election; secondly, Howard's more pragmatic second opposition leadership.[5] Howard's campaign held Keating responsible for the early 1990s recession rather than arguing for reform.

As Prime Minister, Howard implemented a moderate version of his desired industrial relations reforms, creating a system of individual employer–employee workplace negotiations. He later introduced a consumption tax. These were reforms that Hawke would not have made, but continued the direction of his reconstruction. Howard was generally considered a good economic manager. His success owed much to his predecessors, but equally,

[5] Alexander Downer led the opposition briefly and unsuccessfully between Hewson and Howard.

his approach strengthened the system they had created, contributing to Hawke's legacy.

**Conclusion**

The skills of presidents and prime ministers and the contexts of their leadership are crucial to assessments of their success, but so far political science has ignored the effects of oppositions. These cases show that the achievements and reputations of even the most successful government leaders are influenced by oppositions. Certainly, other factors not examined here contribute to assessments of the success of leaders. The Iran-Contra scandal diminished assessments of Reagan, and Thatcher's and Hawke's parties damaged their reputations by removing them from office.

Each leader benefited from divided, often ineffective oppositions. Each benefited from opponents who were inferior public performers, and from successors who entrenched their reforms. However, even these apparently weak oppositions enjoyed moments of success and demonstrated that oppositions can successfully undermine government leaders. That these various oppositions eventually accepted their opponents' programmes was partly due to external circumstances. Economic improvement in the three countries ensured that subsequent leaders retained market-based approaches, but the extent to which reconstructive leaders were responsible for the improvement remains debatable.

The contribution of oppositions is one additional factor crucial to the success of government leaders. Future attempts to understand the success of presidents and prime ministers should consider the complex public and private relationships between leaders and their opponents who do much to assist and much to damage them. Fundamentally, we should recognise that when an opposition is deliberately unhelpful it presents a different, more

difficult challenge to government leaders. However, we should also consider how effectively government leaders engage with oppositions and attempt to develop a positive relationship. A greater understanding of this interaction can only improve our understanding of success in political leadership.

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Article 3

# A Contextual Framework for Assessing Reconstructive Prime Ministerial Success.

Brendan McCaffrie

*This article develops a framework for assessing political leadership success by comparing leaders in similar historical contexts. It finds that Nichols and Myers' three tasks of reconstruction can be used to assess the relative success of reconstructive prime ministers, but that the tasks are more complex than their original conception acknowledges. Examination of three reconstructive Australian Prime Ministers shows that the relationship between skill and context is intricate. Different skills and leadership styles are suited to different contexts, but are also suited to different aspects of the shared context. Reconstructive leaders must also pay sufficient attention to tasks that are beyond their natural strengths.*

Prime Ministerial leadership is complex and does not easily lend itself to analyses of success or failure. Perhaps the greatest challenge is comparing leaders of different times who face different problems. A second challenge is disentangling the leaders' reputations from their actual performance. Comparing the performance of leaders who occupy a similar historical context on tasks relevant to that context addresses both of these difficulties. The understanding of historical context used here derives from Skowronek's work on the American Presidency, which defines the opportunities available to leaders according to their relationship with the prevailing orthodox governing ideas and institutional arrangements, termed the "regime" (1997, 2008).

Throughout history, regimes are created then gradually weaken, before being destroyed and replaced. Thus, regimes create recurring contexts that leaders at different points in history share. This article develops a method for assessing leaders' success in one of Skowronek's four contexts; "reconstructive" leadership, which demands that leaders build a new regime after the previous one has collapsed. Examining one of Skowronek's types cannot solve all problems of analysing leadership success, but it illustrates the advantages of a historical-context based approach.

Studying prime ministerial success benefits our understanding of leaders' constraints and opportunities and the ways that they can operate within and around them. However, a greater understanding of reconstructive political leadership is also important because of its far-reaching policy implications. Reconstructive leaders have unparalleled opportunities to implement what Hall calls third order change (1993), which alters the parameters of multiple areas of public policy for decades. Thus, an understanding of reconstructive leadership is crucial to those who study public policy.

The approach developed here assesses reconstructive leaders using a modified version of Nichols and Myers' three tasks of reconstruction, which those authors used to test whether reconstructions have occurred (2010). As the analysis is based on tasks, it assesses performance, not reputation, and as the tasks relate to one historical context, it compares leaders who had similar opportunities. The cases below demonstrate both that reconstructive leadership is broad and varied and that the skills it requires are similarly varied.

Nichols and Myers' approach is applied in studies of the three most recent reconstructive Australian Prime Ministers, John Curtin and Ben Chifley in the 1940s and Bob Hawke in the 1980s. These choices demonstrate three different

leadership styles in one context. Hawke's consensus approach was well-suited to coalition building, but less appropriate to defining his reconstruction, Curtin's rhetorical prowess meant he was better at this latter task, while Chifley's more retiring, administrative approach suited institutionalisation and party management. However, reconstructive leaders' success also depends upon their ability to address tasks that come less naturally to them.

**Historical Context and Success**

Context complicates assessments of Prime Ministerial success. Circumstances favour some leaders, allowing them greater authority and thus greater achievements. As their authority principally derives from historical context and their exploitation of it, applying the same criteria to Prime Ministers in other contexts is unfair. Furthermore, Crockett shows that, if leaders in certain contexts attempt extensive changes, the result is invariably negative for the polity. Therefore, these leaders have a "normative duty" to be steady administrators, while those in different historical circumstances have a normative duty to make major changes (Crockett 2002: 45). Rather than considering Dwight Eisenhower unsuccessful because his achievements were less substantial than Franklin Roosevelt's, we should judge these leaders by different criteria appropriate to their historical contexts.

Historical context is not entirely determined and leaders can redefine contexts, thereby enhancing their authority ('t Hart 2012). This is most apparent when leaders change their institutional contexts, altering the resources of both the office and their governments (Bennister 2007). Leaders can also alter their historical contexts discursively or by changing the relationship between government and political interests, although these are more difficult. There are limitations on the extent to which leaders can redefine context. Wars and

economic crises are impossible to ignore and can entirely define leaders' challenges and opportunities.

Skowronek shows that recurrent patterns of authority, shaped by historical context, define the paramount challenge of executive political leadership. This allows comparison of historically distant leaders on their ability to surmount similar authority challenges (1997: 17-18). The relationship between leaders' authority and institutional resources is complex. Leaders' institutional resources are not equal regardless of their place in history, but contextually derived authority shapes capacity to use resources (Skowronek 1997: 17-32). This understanding of the relationship between authority and resources conflicts with the way Prime Ministerial leadership is often conceptualised. Heffernan depicts authority as predominantly derived from personal resources (2003: 350-351). Undoubtedly, authority is derived both ways, but Heffernan's is probably more important in constrained historical contexts. Authority derived from personal resources relies heavily upon fickle factors like public opinion and is therefore less stable than contextual authority, especially for reconstructive leaders.

The patterns of authority Skowronek identified within the US are present elsewhere (1995); they appear wherever the executive leader is the most creative agent of change and where an ideological battle between progressive and conservative forces can lead to one of these groups controlling government. Australia meets these criteria and a pattern of regimes similar to Skowronek's has been observed there (Laing and McCaffrie 2013, Walter 2009: 341-347). Such patterns are also evident in the UK (Studlar 2007) and New Zealand (Johansson 2009). The cases below provide further evidence of the broader applicability of Skowronek's approach and the first evidence of the applicability of Nichols and Myers' framework outside the US.

Skowronek describes four types of President, defined by the resilience or vulnerability of the regime they inherit and their affiliation with, or opposition to, that regime (see Table 1) (Skowronek 1997: 37-44). Ronald Reagan inherited a regime based on Keynesian economics and the New Deal welfare state, which the stagflation crisis had shown to be vulnerable. His opposition to this vulnerable regime made him a reconstructive leader, giving him the authority to replace the old regime with a new one based on neoliberal economics and small government. Reconstructive leaders are typically remembered for major achievements and lasting legacies, and usually rate at or near the top of rankings studies (Nichols, 2012).

| Regime | Opposed leader | Affiliated leader |
|---|---|---|
| **Vulnerable** | Reconstruction | Disjunction |
| **Resilient** | Pre-emption | Articulation |

Table 1. Recurrent structures of Presidential Authority (Skowronek 1997: 36).

All four leadership types are shown in Table 1, but this article focuses exclusively on reconstructive leaders, providing the first investigation of variations in their success. Nichols and Myers provide a starting point, arguing that some leaders fail to reconstruct in a situation that demands it (2010: 815). They describe three tasks that reconstructive leaders must complete: realigning the axis of partisan cleavage; building and maintaining a majority partisan coalition; and ensuring that their new regime is institutionalised. These tasks form the basis of the framework for assessing reconstructive leadership success developed below.

Some criteria of leadership success are important in all contexts. Recent work by 't Hart (2011) and by Helms (2012) suggests that all leaders must be effective, accountable, maintain the support of followers and be (or at least appear) authentic and honest. However, historical context shapes leaders' abilities to address even these concerns. Leaders during crises must prioritise effectiveness over accountability, although at other times these criteria are more evenly balanced. Furthermore, the actions required to be considered effective and to maintain support differ depending on context. Reconstructive leaders who succeed in completing Nichols and Myers' three tasks are likely to be judged highly on all of Helms' and 't Hart's criteria. Effectiveness and maintaining followers' support are directly related to Nichols and Myers' tasks of institutionalisation and maintaining a majority coalition. Furthermore, if leaders are effective, they are more likely to be judged as ethical (Ciulla and Forsyth 2011: 233). Thus, the augmented version of Nichols and Myers' tasks applied below addresses these universal concerns.

Skill is crucial in explaining Prime Ministerial success. The "skill in context" approach to political leadership (Hargrove 1998, Bell, Hargrove and Theakston 1999, Hargrove and Owens 2003) holds that the most successful leaders are those whose skills are appropriate to, and reinforced by, their context. The constrained context of Jacques Chirac, John Major and George H. W. Bush encouraged their use of transactional bargaining skills, whereas reconstructive leaders, such as Margaret Thatcher and Reagan, required greater vision (Bell, Hargrove and Theakston 1999: 546-547). The cases below support the argument that different skills are relevant to leaders in different contexts. However, reconstructive leadership tasks are so varied that most leaders have appropriate skills for some of them and success also depends upon completing tasks that do not match leader's skills. Nichols and Myers'

three tasks suggest rhetoric and persuasion, coalition building and bargaining and administrative and organisation building skills all are crucial.

**Augmenting Nichols and Myers' Framework**

Nichols and Myers' framework provides a basis to investigate the success of reconstructive leaders, but it requires augmentation. They suggest their three tasks must all be completed for a reconstruction to occur, allowing leaders either to fail or succeed (2010). However, the tasks are better conceptualised as being completed by degrees, with leaders having more or less success at each. The discussion below shows that the tasks are more complex than Nichols and Myers describe. Furthermore, they are on-going and leaders must continually fight to maintain success in each. An augmented version of the tasks is provided in Table 2 at the end of this section.

*Shifting the main axis of partisan cleavage*

Nichols and Myers' first task, shifting the main axis of partisan cleavage, requires that reconstructive leaders increase the salience of certain conflicts within society (2010: 815). Leaders must alter public and elite understandings of what is most important in politics and thereby change the philosophy of government. Reagan used his "government is the problem" stance to link his positions on tax policy, market deregulation, and aggressive Cold War foreign policy (Nichols and Myers 2010: 816). These changes may be underway already but the leader must galvanise public and elite desires for reconstruction and define the new orthodoxy.

Reconstructive leaders' authority to repudiate past arrangements provides the greatest resource leaders can have (Skowronek 1997: 27). Successful repudiation creates the discursive space to define the future regime. Typically, reconstructive leaders capitalise on political crises to repudiate past arrangements, framing the crisis to justify their reconstruction. This reflects

William Riker's notion of "heresthetics", by which leaders structure the political world to their advantage (1986). The American Civil War justified Abraham Lincoln's break with the past, however, for reconstructive leaders in the 1980s, such as Reagan, Thatcher and Hawke, stagflation was a less obvious crisis. Therefore, considerable skill can be required to define and frame events so as to exploit them (Hargrove and Owens 2003: 11).

Oppositions can make redefining politics more difficult, be they coherent, institutionalised oppositions in Australia or more diffuse oppositions in America. Reconstructive leaders must counter alternative explanations and solutions to succeed. Some oppositions contest both the reconstructive leader's definition of, and solution to, the problem. Others accept the leader's definition of the problem, but contest elements of the proposed solution. A third possibility sees oppositions agree with major aspects of the redefinition, thus assisting the reconstruction (McCaffrie 2012). Reconstructive leaders must retain control of the reconstruction's definition, or risk seeing an ideologically different regime emerge. Success here usually sees oppositions alter their policies and agree with substantial sections of reconstructive leaders' programmes.

This discussion suggests three elements to this first task of reconstruction (see Table 2). To shift the axis of partisan cleavage reconstructive leaders must repudiate the previous regime to make discursive space for another world-view. Their repudiation should frame political and policy problems to suggest their solution as the best alternative. Reconstructive leaders must also redefine the political and policy logic, raising the salience of particular societal conflicts as Nichols and Myers describe. Furthermore, they must defeat alternative arguments, thereby maintaining control of the redefinition.

*Assembling a New Majority Partisan Coalition*

Nichols and Myers consider assembling a new majority partisan coalition to be a task of: "bringing together different groups within the social structure" (2010: 816). The support of important social groups aids the implementation of policy changes and helps leaders to maintain a political advantage. This is crucial, but Nichols and Myers' description underemphasises leaders' need to maintain legislative majorities. This latter challenge varies in different political institutions. US Presidents cannot rely on their own parties to vote with them in the legislature as Australian Prime Ministers can (Elgie 1995: 127-128). For Prime Ministers, much of the contest of ideas occurs within parliamentary parties, rather than in the legislature (Laing and McCaffrie 2013). As most Australian Prime Ministers hold secure lower house majorities, their initial focus is ensuring that factions and groupings within the party accept changes, before assembling cross-party support in the Upper House. As reconstructions require the implementation of new ideas, this often requires that leaders re-orient their party to support the new regime (Skowronek 1997: 38).

There are two distinct facets to developing a majority coalition (see Table 2). One is social and is closely related to the reconstructive leader's redefinition of the axis of partisan cleavage. The other is legislative and involves creating and maintaining a firm parliamentary, congressional or party majority. Maintaining both majorities makes reconstructive success more likely.

*Institutionalising the new political regime*

Reconstructive leaders must reshape the institutional environment to accommodate and consolidate the new regime. Nichols and Myers examine two facets of institutionalisation. One entrenches the political advantage of new regime supporters, such as Andrew Jackson's development of the first mass political party (Nichols and Myers 2010: 821). This is largely an optional

addition to the other, more important, form of institutionalisation which entrenches the regime ideas in the institutions of government. This facet of institutionalisation itself has two parts; the destruction of pre-existing governmental arrangements and the creation of new ones (Orren and Skowronek 1998: 698-699). When the destruction of what comes before is less complete, it helps entrenched interests fight reforms. Nichols and Myers note that institutionalisation is the most variable of their tasks. Thus, it is the most difficult to assess in relative terms. Approaches greatly vary as different regimes require different forms of institutionalisation.

Appointments in key bureaucratic positions are crucial to successful institutionalisation as important officials can slow or even stop reconstructions. Reconstructive leaders must also establish mechanisms that entrench the new regime logic. This might mean creating or destroying government departments, or enhancing or diminishing the powers of existing agencies. However, institutionalisation is achieved, it must ensure the new governing logic becomes a natural part of government and is therefore difficult to remove.

| **Shifting the Axis of Partisan Cleavage** | **Assembling a Majority Coalition** | **Institutionalisation** |
|---|---|---|
| Repudiate prior regime, frame crisis to advantage | Build a legislative majority | Destroy prior institutions |
| Define the new regime | Build a social majority | Create new institutions/ redefine existing ones |
| Defeat opposition attempts to attack redefinition | | Entrench political advantage |

Table 2: Framework for Assessing Reconstructive Leadership Success.

## Applying the Framework

Table 2 summarises a framework for testing reconstructive leaders' performance. Leaders who perform strongly in each of these eight categories ensure a strong reconstruction and a lasting regime. The framework must be applied with sensitivity to the priorities of the reconstruction, as these priorities can alter the relative importance of the tasks. It was important for Franklin Roosevelt to destroy existing institutions, but far more important for Reagan as smaller government was vital to his reconstruction. The changing makeup of society alters which social groups must be included in a majority coalition. The economic focus of the two reconstructions examined below meant that business and unions were pivotal. However, in the 1980s additional social groups had emerged in areas such as welfare and environment and they needed to be included in Hawke's reconstructive coalition.

In analysing a Prime Minister's performance on each of the eight categories, we must consider the effect of the performance on the overall success of the reconstruction. If a failure imperils the reconstruction this is assessed more harshly than a failure with superficial consequences. However, there is no case in which greater success in any of the categories would not advantage the leader. Similarly, when Prime Ministerial performance varies within the categories over time, the effect of this variation on the reconstruction guides assessments of the leader's performance. If Prime Ministers initially counteract opposition arguments, but quickly falter, they imperil the reconstruction. This is judged more harshly than if leaders perform this task well for several years and implement their reconstruction, before later struggling.

The following three case studies are presented in order from most to least successful according to this article's analysis. The analysis uses the augmented

version of Nichols and Myers' framework, as indicated in a table at the end of each case, in which the Prime Minister's performance is rated on a five point scale (very weak, weak, average, strong, very strong). This is a simplification, but a useful one for comparing leaders' performance. The choice of Prime Ministers allows us to compare Curtin and Chifley's state-building reconstruction with Hawke's in which the government's role diminished. A disadvantage in this selection is the lack of Liberal Party leaders. This reflects a quirk of history, Australia has had three reconstructions since Federation, but none has been instigated by leaders of the modern Liberal Party. The Curtin-Chifley reconstruction was complicated by Curtin's death in 1945, before World War II ended. Curtin began the reconstruction, but had not institutionalised it. However, as the tasks are on-going, each leader performed all tasks and can be assessed upon them.

**Bob Hawke**

Hawke's reconstructive leadership is the most successful of those examined here. He completed the tasks to a greater degree than the other leaders. Inheriting a mix of protectionism and Keynesian demand management, Hawke shifted the Australian economy towards a more open, market-based, approach. This saw the floating of Australia's currency and a series of deregulatory measures. For a reconstructive leader his weakness of vision was unusual, but he compensated for this with success in other areas, particularly in maintaining a majority coalition.

*Shifting the Axis of Partisan Cleavage*

Unlike his contemporaries Thatcher and Reagan, Hawke built his programme on a promise of "consensus". In the years before his Prime Ministership, Hawke repudiated the Fraser Government's confrontational style, which he claimed had "'poisoned' the 'very wellsprings of national life'" (quoted in

Curran 2006: 244; also Hawke 1979). Hawke had a strong reputation for resolving industrial disputes as President of the ACTU, thus his definition of the problem prescribed his own leadership style as the solution (Pemberton and Davis 1986: 57). Hawke had a greater challenge than Curtin or Chifley in defining the situation to his advantage. The need for a new approach was not as obvious in the 1980s as it was in the 1940s, but Hawke, supported by Treasurer Paul Keating, framed the external threat of changing international economic conditions to advocate a major policy shift (1979: 67). He repeated throughout the 1980s, that "if the world does not trust you, then it can ruin you", advocating greater economic openness (Walter 1999: 30). The lack of a strong alternative discourse demonstrates the success of this message, as does support for his programme from many societal interests with ideological reasons to oppose the reconstruction.

Hawke was an unusual reconstructive leader as he lacked a clear vision of what his reconstruction should be (see Bramston 2003: 64). Instead, he emphasised pragmatism and consensus, but these were the means, not the end. Usually, limited success in defining the reconstruction would make reconstruction difficult, but Hawke's successes in the other tasks ensured that his reconstruction was realised. His pragmatism limited his control of reconstructive outcomes, but it allowed him greater flexibility with policies, helping him to maintain a majority coalition.

Hawke was fortunate that the Opposition agreed with the shift of the axis of partisan cleavage and did not capitalise on his failure clearly to define the reconstruction. Instead, the rhetorical contest between Government and Opposition was largely about details of managing the new economic order. The Opposition advocated deepening the reconstruction, particularly in industrial relations, which enabled Hawke to maintain a centrist image and portray the Coalition as extreme. He was aided in this by the Liberals' internal

squabbling (McCaffrie, 2012). Hawke effectively exploited Opposition weakness, allowing his more gradual approach to reconstruction to prevail.

*Majority Coalition*

Hawke's consensus style suited social coalition building. Early in his Prime Ministership he held an Economic Summit involving business, unions and other social groups seeking a consensus response to national economic problems. It was effective and participants supported subsequent policy steps (Goldfinch and 't Hart 2003: 246). Similarly, the Government-Union Accord ensured that unions contributed to the economic strategy, curbing inflation by restricting wage increase demands in return for improvements to social services (Walter 2009: 268). Hawke's ACTU background gave the Accord credibility, helping him to persuade the unions to accept policies they would normally oppose. Unions and business were included in institutions such as the Economic Planning and Advisory Council, while in different policy areas similar roles were given to bodies such as the Australian Council of Social Service and the Australian Conservation Foundation (Moore 2003: 119). Hawke and his Ministers used these groups extensively in policy development, helping to maintain their support for the reconstruction.

The outcomes of events such as the Economic Summit were not entirely in Hawke's control. However, his pragmatic consensus approach afforded him an advantage in forming and maintaining a coalition. He could abandon policies that proved difficult to implement, as he did at the 1985 Tax Summit with the unpopular consumption tax. Such flexibility encouraged groups to continue to support the reconstruction.

The Hawke Government always held strong Lower House majorities and the Opposition's agreement with many Government economic measures meant that, subject to some amendment, these were always likely to pass the Senate.

However, on matters such as the deregulation of the Australian banking system and the proposed consumption tax, Hawke and Keating needed to persuade the Party's left and centre-left factions (Gittins 1984, Ellercamp and Savva 1984, O'Reilly 1985a, 1985b). Hawke won their support, or at least acquiescence, and thus profoundly recast the party (Jaensch 1989). Hawke's empowerment of factional leaders generally smoothed management of party disagreements. Factional leaders were heavily involved in policy decisions and, thus, more able to ensure their faction's support (Boston and Uhr 1996: 51). Hawke similarly empowered his Cabinet, allowing most ministers to manage their portfolios with minimal interference. This led Keating to publicly claim responsibility for much of the economic change that was central to the reconstruction, although the extent to which he deserves this credit is contested. However, it is clear that Hawke's method utilised his ministers well and was better able to maintain party unity than a dominating leadership style would have.

Caucus replaced Hawke with Keating in 1991, but this resulted from animosity between Keating and Hawke (Weller 1994: 136) and declining poll ratings, not a failure to preserve party support for the reconstruction. Overall, Hawke's consensus style successfully sustained Party support for the reconstruction. However, the context changed and the Party needed reinvigoration after nearly a decade of government. This called for an energetic leader with a clear vision, neither trait Hawke could then provide. However, crucially for assessing Hawke, his approach was highly effective throughout most of the reconstruction.

*Institutionalisation*

Many reconstructive policies were contested by the public service. Initially, Treasury Secretary John Stone's opposition prevented Hawke and Keating

from floating the dollar, despite Reserve Bank support for the policy. Hawke and Keating compromised with Stone, agreeing to float only the forward rate, not the spot rate. However, in December 1983 rampant currency speculation created a potential financial crisis. Hawke and Keating exploited this circumstance to implement a full currency float and remove exchange controls (Goldfinch and 't Hart 2003: 248-249). This further evidences the importance of utilising context to enhance authority. It also underlines the importance of bureaucratic appointments. The reconstruction gathered pace when Bernie Fraser replaced Stone (Goldfinch and 't Hart 2003: 245).

The reconstruction increased the importance of non-political agencies. This helped entrench the regime, as it is politically difficult for subsequent governments to wrest powers back from such agencies. The Reserve Bank's powers increased by indirect means as the abandonment of Keynesian instruments of monetary policy meant its control over interest rates on short-term loans to banks became the main tool for controlling inflation (Bell 2001: 463-465). The Hawke Government also began an innovative competition policy, which was implemented under Keating's Prime Ministership. Keating deserves much of the credit for this policy and its institutionalisation. It created independent statutory bodies such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, depoliticising much business regulation (Brennan and Pincus 2002: 69). The creation of these agencies meant that future attempts to alter financial policy would potentially face opposition from a greater number of expert actors.

Most of the major economic measures of Hawke's reconstruction were well-entrenched. The nature of many economic policy changes made them difficult to reverse. Re-regulating newly deregulated industries would be highly disruptive, as would re-pegging the currency. The Hawke and Keating

governments' institutional arrangements further ensured that the logic of Hawke's regime was self-perpetuating (see Table 3).

| | Repudiate/Frame Crisis | Redefine | Defeat Opposition |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Realign axis of partisan cleavage** | Strong | Weak | Strong |

| | Parliamentary Majority | Social Majority |
|---|---|---|
| **Maintain Majority Coalition** | Initially Strong, later Weak | Very Strong |

| | Destroy arrangements | Create arrangements | Inst. Political Advantage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Institutionalise the regime** | Average | Strong | Average |

Table 3: Summary of Bob Hawke's reconstructive success.

### John Curtin

Curtin is our second most successful leader, as summarised in Table 4 below, although his performance falls only slightly short of Hawke's. Curtin is often cited as Australia's best ever Prime Minister, although John Hirst argues he has been consistently overrated and did too little to transform society to be considered the equal of the Hawke-Keating partnership (2010: 167-168). However, Hirst overlooked Curtin's transformative economic actions (Edwards 2005), focusing exclusively on his defence policy and arguing that its novelty is often overemphasised (see also Curran 2011).

The dominant regime for three decades preceding Curtin's Government centred on the "Australian Settlement" (Kelly 2008), with its moderate-liberal

economics, protectionism and targeted, not universal, welfare (Walter 2009: 337). The economic liberalism of the Settlement appeared responsible for the Depression, facilitating arguments for greater economic control (Walter 2009: 173). Curtin's reconstruction implemented Keynesian economics with a greater emphasis on government planning and increased government welfare (Walter 2009: 151, 173; Edwards 2005; Stephens 1976). Curtin performed the rhetorical tasks of repudiation effectively and firmly entrenched economic intervention and full employment as the new governing logic. Yet, limitations in his social coalition building, reinforced by Chifley's similar weakness, made his successor's job difficult and imperilled the reconstruction.

*Shifting the Axis of Partisan Cleavage*

Curtin's rhetorical skill ensured his success in all aspects of shifting the axis of partisan cleavage. He succeeded in tying the Depression and the War together as reasons for his reconstruction. In repudiating past problems, he framed his full employment vision as the solution: "the manhood of this country will not rot in unemployment as it did after the last war" (quoted in Black 1995: 226). From early in the War, Curtin attacked Prime Minister Robert Menzies' European defence focus, given the threat from Japan (Day 1999: 384). He used that threat to justify greater economic planning. Curtin opened his 1940 election campaign arguing, as he did throughout the war, that economic planning was necessary to utilise the nation's resources to win both the war and the peace (*The Advocate* 1940). This planning meant national control of banking and interest rates, and national direction of investment.

Curtin's successful redefinition of the partisan cleavage began in opposition. Full employment became a goal of both major parties, although the Coalition government questioned Curtin's proposed methods. At the 1937 election, Prime Minister Joseph Lyons contended that Curtin would remove individual

freedom, replacing it with Government "dictation" (*Sydney Morning Herald* 1937). The non-Labor parties repeated this attack throughout Curtin's leadership, arguing for greater business independence in achieving full-employment (*The Argus* 1943). Curtin's clear vision of full employment quickly became the orthodoxy.

Curtin rejected Menzies' appeal to form a national government. This was a risk, but it allowed him to contest and discredit the UAP Government's defence strategy, a major factor in that Government's collapse. In opposition, UAP divisions became more apparent and, during the 1943 election campaign, Menzies and a group of supporters undermined the Liberal-Country Party Coalition's leadership (Day 1999: 509-510). The Opposition agreed with much of the reconstruction, evidence of Curtin's success in shifting the axis of partisan cleavage. This and the Opposition's division and apparent ineptitude helped him maintain control of the reconstructive definition.

*Majority Coalition*

Curtin led a Labor party that had recently split because of the difficulties of governing during the Depression. His surprise leadership victory resulted from his consistent personal opposition to the deflationary Premiers' Plan that the Labor government had followed. This made him acceptable to renegade Jack Lang supporters and able to re-unite the Party (Irving 2001: 70-71). Curtin was well supported by Caucus and maintained party unity, despite many issues that might have caused further splits, particularly conscription. He enabled Labor to advocate a positive programme after a period of "intellectual bankruptcy" (McMullin 1991: 186). Curtin and Hawke were similarly effective at maintaining party unity, despite both dealing with difficult party circumstances.

Developing a social coalition to support full employment required business and union support. The unions needed little convincing; the ACTU only worried that the Government was not entirely committed to this cause, quibbling over government statements promising the "fullest possible employment", rather than "full employment" (*Courier-Mail* 1945). The Government dismissed union arguments against giving ex-servicemen priority in employment (*The Argus* 1944). When such disagreements arose, Curtin ensured the unions remained in the coalition, without surrendering his priorities.

The Government's relationship with business was more difficult than that with the unions, but the War enabled Curtin to garner business support for the reorganisation of the Australian economy. Wartime production was paramount, necessitating a business partnership with government. Business helped the national cause, particularly in submitting to extensive government direction of production. As business agreed with the need for full employment and social security based welfare (Walter 2009: 194), and as Curtin believed in the importance of manufacturing in ensuring full employment (Bell 1993: 17), there was considerable room for cooperation.

However, business did not remain in the post-war reconstructive coalition. It disagreed with the extent of Curtin's planned government economic intervention and with the proposed level of taxation. Curtin met with the Chamber of Manufactures before the War ended to discuss peacetime economic plans. Disagreements over the extent of government economic involvement were considerable. The Chamber's President questioned the nature of price controls, the prospect of political control of the Commonwealth Bank and several other regulations and restrictions. The Chamber essentially advocated returning to pre-War economic arrangements, eschewing Curtin's new direction (*The Argus* 1945a). Later, the Chamber complained, with some

justification, that the Government White Paper on Full Employment ignored concerns it raised at the conference.

Curtin understood business' importance to his reconstruction, but was unwilling or unable to compromise. The ideological divide between Curtin's Government and business was significant, but the extent of policy agreement could have enabled cooperation. Undoubtedly, lack of compromise was a failure of both business and government, but it resulted in business eventually becoming a committed enemy of the Labor Government. The primary contention during Curtin's Prime Ministership was Labor's attempts to increase government micro-economic intervention. Business opposition meant Labor was unable to implement such plans (Bell 1993: 21-24). Curtin's coalition building compares unfavourably with Hawke's inclusiveness and delicate balancing of competing interests. His performance in maintaining a social majority was mixed and his difficulties made institutionalising the regime more complex, directly affecting Chifley's Prime Ministership more than his own.

*Institutionalisation*

Although Curtin died before he could complete the regime's institutionalisation, he was crucial in establishing government powers that allowed institutionalisation to occur. However, his success here was uneven. His uniform taxation measures succeeded, permanently increasing Commonwealth Government powers in relation to the States. Curtin gained parliamentary support by promising not to raise taxes, despite personally wanting them raised (Edwards 2005: 135-137). Control over income tax enabled the Government to fund post-war state building measures, such as the migration programme and the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme, and

welfare measures, such as the old age pension and unemployment insurance (Edwards 2005: 139).

However, Curtin was not entirely successful at building government powers for the reconstruction. The 1944 "14 Powers" referendum was designed to extend government powers over industry, production and employment, as well as establishing certain social powers and enshrining personal freedoms. Curtin devoted little effort to the campaign (Day 1999: 550) and the bundling of fourteen different propositions into one question made success less likely. His struggles in maintaining a majority coalition were also instrumental in the referendum's failure, with business joining the Opposition in campaigning against it (Bell 1993: 23). The failure of this referendum, and other attempts during Chifley's Prime Ministership, limited Labor's capacity to institutionalise its micro-economic controls. The Government had to abandon plans for institutions designed to administer public funds in certain private industries and to direct national investment (Bell 1993: 23).

The War helped the regime's institutionalisation. New demands on the public service meant it virtually doubled in size, gaining functions and capacity (Walter 2009: 181). The scale of this reorganisation meant Curtin did not need to destroy existing arrangements. He created a Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, which was designed as "an instrument of social change" for the post-war period (Coombs 1981: 26). H. C. Coombs, that Ministry's first Director was young and energetic and, with Chifley's oversight as Minister, developed a staff that shared these characteristics. They created the White Paper on Full Employment, providing the blueprint for post-war economic policy (Walter 2009: 183-185). The generational change in the public service was crucial in allowing government to develop with a clear focus on post-war requirements.

Curtin did much to reform and revitalise the Labor Party and make it an electoral force. He held a political advantage, having used defence issues to weaken the Coalition parties, but could not entrench it before dying; that task would be Chifley's. Overall, Curtin successfully capitalised on favourable circumstances to begin the process of institutionalising the regime. Yet, the prospects of micro-economic reform to match the Governments' macro-economic changes were limited by a lack of relevant powers and a difficult relationship with business.

| | Repudiate/Frame Crisis | Redefine | Defeat Opposition |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Realign axis of partisan cleavage** | Strong | Strong | Strong |

| | Parliamentary Majority | Social Majority |
|---|---|---|
| **Maintain Majority Coalition** | Strong | Weak |

| | Destroy arrangements | Create arrangements | Inst. Political Advantage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Institutionalise the regime** | NA | Average | Strong |

Table 4: Summary of John Curtin's reconstructive success.

### Ben Chifley

Chifley is the least successful of the reconstructive leaders examined here. Tasked with continuing Curtin's push for full employment and safety from any future Depression, he did too little to control the definition of the

reconstruction. Despite his strength as both a party and organisational leader, Chifley's struggles with the axis of partisan cleavage limited his ability to succeed at the other two. Chifley was talented, but he engaged too little in areas outside his expertise (see Table 5 below).

*Shifting the Axis of Partisan Cleavage*

Chifley continued Curtin's repudiation of the conditions that led to the Great Depression, using fears of another depression to justify major policy shifts. This was particularly evident in policies that increased government economic control. Introducing bills to strengthen banking regulations in 1945, Chifley explained that the banks' failure to extend credit during the Depression motivated the changes (*The Argus* 1945b). He sought full employment and a new export focus to make Australia independent and less vulnerable to external shocks (Day 2007: 474).

Chifley lacked interest in public persuasion. Despite his government's expansive nation-building vision for the future, his campaign speeches reduced his plans to unconnected policy proposals (Day 2007: 462). His 1947 attempt to nationalise Australia's banks demonstrated his failure at each of the elements of shifting the axis of partisan cleavage. This was a significant, controversial policy, but Chifley announced it with a cursory press release lacking any explanation for the action (McMullin 1991: 248). He eschewed an opportunity to repudiate the previous banking system and to clarify the definition of the reconstruction by explaining the future place of banking. Opponents of the measure, including the banks themselves, dominated discussion of the issue for several weeks. Their argument, that nationalisation was about creating socialism in Australia, went uncontested (*The Argus* 1947). Although other Ministers made occasional efforts to connect nationalisation to the repudiation of Depression era banking practices, Chifley neglected to

elaborate until he introduced the bill to parliament two months later (*Sydney Morning Herald* 1947, Day 2007: 491-492).

Chifley was an unenthusiastic campaigner and Menzies' rhetoric easily defeated his at the 1949 election. Chifley's radio performance was dull and Menzies outshone him in the most important communications medium of the day (Ward 1999: 326-327). Menzies argued for less government interference in economic matters (Lee 1994: 515), promising to end petrol rationing and reduce banking regulations. However, he advocated the retention and even expansion of welfare, extending child endowments to first children (Henderson 1994: 102). Chifley relied heavily on the electorate's trust in his record, rather than on a vision for the future. His policy broadcast mentioned the importance of the Government's public works programmes in ensuring full employment and preventing a future depression, but largely detailed past achievements (Day 2007: 529-531, *Sydney Morning Herald* 1949). Labor's election loss was avoidable and at least partly the result of Chifley's poor campaigning (Lee 1994: 514). Chifley imperilled the reconstruction, handing Menzies control of the regime. This is clear evidence of his deficiency in maintaining control of the reconstructive definition and in defeating opposition. His failure was not total, as he successfully led Labor at the 1946 election, although this was against a weaker opposition.

*Majority Coalition*

Chifley's maintenance of a parliamentary majority was a strong point. He was an excellent party leader and included Caucus in decisions more than Curtin had. Through this inclusiveness, Chifley generally ensured that Caucus accepted his preferred path, including approving the reform programme that comprised the bulk of Labor's reconstructive agenda (Freudenberg 2001: 83). This was unsurprising as it conformed to traditional Labor priorities (Johnson

1989: 18-19). However, Chifley also convinced Caucus to approve ratification of the Bretton Woods agreement, overcoming staunch opposition from many within his Party in a battle that lasted more than two years. The left of the Party was vehemently opposed and the centre took much convincing, but Chifley won them over with tax reductions and pension increases (Crisp 1960: 198-212).

In terms of Chifley's social coalition, the unions' support was solid, except for Communist elements which sought to disrupt economic recovery. This was particularly evident in the coal miners' strikes of 1949, in which Chifley gained support from the labour movement for punitive action against the striking miners. Although significant elements of most major union groups disagreed with such measures as freezing union funds, Chifley fought hard and gained the support of the ACTU and other major unions for his harsh approach (Crisp 1960: 364). His decision to use the army as strike-breakers further tested union support. This move was probably unnecessary, occurring as the strike was dissipating (Day 2007: 524), and it likely cost Labor votes in the 1949 election (Crisp 1960: 367, Lee 1994).

The distance between business and the Labor Government, evident at the end of Curtin's Prime Ministership, worsened under Chifley. Within a week of the Japanese surrender, business pressured the Government to remove wartime controls, even as public servants warned that it was moving too swiftly in this direction (Burns 1947). Curtin and Chifley never really sought to compromise and encourage business to become part of the coalition. Again, Chifley's bank nationalisation scheme was the most obvious example. Nationalisation not only reinforced business' exclusion from the majority coalition, it encouraged business to form a coalition against him. Chifley was a skilled operator within the labour movement, but struggled to build support outside.

Chifley's maintenance of a majority coalition was mixed. He managed extremely difficult situations with the unions in the 1949 miners' strike well, although using the army was damaging. The peacetime priorities of business were always likely to keep it outside the Labor Government coalition but Chifley exacerbated tensions with business, rather than pacifying them. A more inclusive approach may have gained Chifley greater support for his economic measures. Union support for the reconstruction was always likely, so Chifley should have focused more heavily on gaining business support.

*Institutionalisation*

The institutionalisation of the reconstruction owed much to Curtin's effectiveness in shifting the partisan cleavage and to the unprecedented public faith in government that came from the War (Walter 2009: 207). Chifley's greatest influence was in altering the public service. He initially found it full of older, rigid, bureaucrats, whose influence was "stultifying" (Day 2007: 416). He ensured younger, more energetic people were hired.

As the Curtin-Chifley reconstruction meant expanding government capability into a range of new areas, it also meant an increase in formal government powers. Thus, the 1946 election saw three referenda to increase Commonwealth Government power over social services, marketing of primary produce and conditions of employment. The social services question was the only success. It enabled the government to introduce a pharmaceutical benefits scheme, including free medicines, despite opposition from medical and pharmacy associations (Day 2007: 473; *The Argus* 1947c). As noted above, the failure of the other referenda limited Labor's ability to add micro-economic controls.

Many of Chifley's state-building initiatives, such as the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric scheme, the Australian National University and population

management to direct migrant workers to areas of need, were supported and continued by Menzies (Walter 2009: 206). Some, like the hydroelectricity project would have been difficult to reverse as construction had started. The Menzies Government only modestly altered banking legislation to ensure greater independence of the banks (Coombs 1981: 133), but this demonstrated the potential effects of Chifley's loss of control of the regime's definition. Losing the rhetorical contest means losing control of the reconstruction and limits a leader's chances of completing the other reconstructive tasks. Assessments of Chifley's leadership must be downgraded because he lost the ability to ensure reconstructive success.

| | **Repudiate/Frame Crisis** | **Redefine** | **Defeat Opposition** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Realign axis of partisan cleavage** | Average | Weak | Weak |

| | **Parliamentary Majority** | **Social Majority** |
|---|---|---|
| **Maintain Majority Coalition** | Strong | Average |

| | **Destroy arrangements** | **Create arrangements** | **Inst. Political Advantage** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Institutionalise the regime** | NA | Strong | Weak |

Table 5: Summary of Ben Chifley's reconstructive success.

## Conclusions

Despite Nichols and Myers' stating that their framework applies only to the United States (2010: 836), the validity of Skowronek's theory outside America

has been established and the cases investigated here suggest that Nichols and Myers' work effectively can be applied to other countries. This supports the frequent calls for more comparative studies of executive leadership. Many advances in American Presidential research have not been matched elsewhere. Carefully applying theoretical advances to new settings can enhance the understanding of executive leadership in other countries, as well as improving the original work.

The cases here show that an augmented version of Nichols and Myers' framework can be used to assess the success of reconstructive Prime Ministers. Furthermore, the cases demonstrate the paramount importance of realigning the partisan cleavage. Successful realignment can assist in the other tasks or compensate for shortcomings in them, but, without realignment, reconstruction is impossible. Chifley, the leader who ranked lowest of our cases, had the least success on this task. However, Hawke's example shows that leaders can compensate for a partial weakness in realigning the partisan cleavage with success on other tasks.

Our three leaders had individual strengths which contributed to their different performances as reconstructive leaders. Although the "skill in context" argument is correct in stating that leaders are more successful when their skills are reinforced by context, this can happen in various ways. Intuitively, vision and rhetorical skill seem most important for reconstructive leaders, given their sweeping policy agendas, but Hawke shows that a pragmatic, managerial approach can also suit the reconstructive context, in particular in helping to assemble a majority coalition. The broadness and complexity of reconstructive leadership means that most leaders will find some of their strengths are useful. Nevertheless, leaders should avoid Chifley's mistake of neglecting his weaker tasks.

There is a greater challenge for future research in creating criteria for judging Skowronek's other leadership types. Tasks involved in reconstructive leadership are more easily defined than tasks involved in other leadership types, because the context of a failing regime means that the usual leadership interest in making major political changes accords with the normative need for change. In other historical circumstances, normative concerns and leaders' desires are less likely to coincide, so it is harder to define what such leaders should do.

Historical context is crucial in understanding success in political leadership. Context does not determine leadership success, but it provides leaders with varying opportunities and constraints, such that we should expect qualitatively different things from them. Thus, assessments of success should apply different criteria to leaders of different historical contexts. The framework here provides a beginning for achieving this in the reconstructive context.

This method of comparing leaders of one historical context with others of the same context allows comparison on criteria that are sensitive to what they can realistically achieve. This is superior to judging all leaders by the same criteria, regardless of opportunities. It allows a deeper understanding of varying paths to success and helps us to discern how individual leaders should act to make best use of their circumstances and abilities. This can also create more realistic expectations of leaders, which, in turn, encourages them to act in ways more appropriate to their contexts.

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Article 4

# Situating Presidential Success: Analysing US Presidential Leadership in Historical Context

Brendan McCaffrie

*In understanding US presidential success, presidents in different historical contexts should be analysed separately. Those presidents who fully exploit a more constrained situation should not be considered less successful than those who effectively utilise more expansive opportunities. This article uses Skowronek's presidential typology to provide a basis to investigate success in varying historical contexts. I argue that presidential success has three forms: personal success, partisan regime success and normative success. Most of Skowronek's presidential types are structurally precluded from achieving all three of these forms. Assessments of presidential success should therefore begin with different expectations of presidents that are appropriate to their context.*

Studies directly analysing success in US presidential leadership are surprisingly scarce. This inattention stems from the difficulty of success as a concept, and from the difficulty of analysing something as complex and varied as an entire presidency ('t Hart 2011). Studies of presidential success tend to assume that all presidents are comparable and that each has equal opportunities to succeed. Often they acknowledge that historical context can be important, but their methods for analysing success rarely reflect this in a systematic way (Simonton 1987: 227, Landy and Milkis 2000, Neustadt 1980, Rockman 1984). Presidential success is frequently only discussed as a

secondary focus, or it is left implicit. The under-examination of this topic encourages an unsophisticated understanding of success. Presidential studies typically rely on a concept of "greatness", which is both under-defined and necessarily out of reach for most presidents. Yet, if we acknowledge the structural advantages and disadvantages of various historical contexts as we examine presidential performance, it is clear that success is possible for all presidents although it differs with context.

This article uses Skowronek's conception of the presidency as a contextually sensitive avenue to the systematic study of presidential success (1997, 2008). Skowronek describes four types of president, defined by their distinct historical contexts and opportunities. The types are based on the relationship between presidents and regimes. These regimes are defined as the dominant collection of ideas and institutions in national politics, supported by a coalition of political elites and social groups (Skowronek 1997: 9-10). The strength of the regimes presidents inherit and their affiliation with or opposition to these regimes, shape their authority as well as their opportunities and constraints.

Skowronek's first type, reconstructive presidents oppose a regime that is vulnerable and failing and therefore have the greatest structural opportunities to act. They remove the prior regime and develop a new one based on new ideas that endure and influence the course of future decisions and programs. Reconstructive leaders typically exercise active leadership that creates major changes and leaves an enduring legacy. As such, they meet the scholarly literature's most frequent criteria of presidential success (Burns 1978, Neustadt 1980, Rockman 1984, Landy and Milkis 2000). Landy and Milkis' description of "great" presidents reads almost exactly as a description of Skowronek's reconstructive presidents (2000: 3). Unsurprisingly, reconstructive presidents regularly outperform other types in rankings studies (Nichols 2012). This

suggests that much of the greatness these scholars observe reflects structural advantage rather than superior performance.

The three other leadership types (see Table 1) are generally less fortunate. Presidents of articulation are affiliated with regime ideas and supporters when the regime is resilient and unlikely to collapse. They build upon their reconstructive predecessors' work, but without the same towering authority. Pre-emptive presidents oppose a resilient regime. Their opposition is generally rebuffed by regime adherents in public and political spheres. Pre-emptive presidents who use their power aggressively generally usually end controversially and with diminished reputation. Finally, disjunctive presidents are affiliated with a decaying, vulnerable regime. These presidents have the least authority to act. Skowronek considers theirs 'an impossible leadership situation', meaning it is uncertain that they can succeed at all (1997: 365). The regime's political answers are no longer effective but these presidents lack the authority, and often the ideological inclination, to reconstruct politics. Comparing presidents within these types acknowledges their different opportunities and allows us to judge them by standards they can realistically meet.

Crockett (2002) first observed that Skowronek's work can be applied to political success; however, he only explored this potential in one of the four types. As yet there has been no other attempt to explain how success varies within Skowronek's presidential types.

| Regime | Opposed leader | Affiliated leader |
|---|---|---|
| **Vulnerable** | Reconstruction | Disjunction |
| **Resilient** | Pre-emption | Articulation |

Table 1. Recurrent structures of Presidential Authority (Skowronek 1997: 36).

Leaders must operate within their contexts, but they are also capable of redefining them ('t Hart 2012, Riker 1986). Presidents are almost certainly incapable of deliberately changing category but they can derive authority from personal resources, such as popularity, to become uncommonly successful examples of their type. Authority derived in this way is normally fleeting compared with that derived from historical context, so it is important that leaders in constrained contexts create and capitalise on short-term authority when it is possible. Presidents can also affect the strength of the dominant regime. Presidential efforts to strengthen or weaken the regime are pivotal to assessments of their longer-term success. Such actions assist successors who are like-minded and hinder those who are ideologically opposed.

This article seeks to make a theoretical contribution to understanding presidential success. It argues that there are three forms of presidential success: personal success, partisan regime success and normative success, and that these are differently available to presidents in different historical contexts. Success should therefore be analysed in different ways for different contexts. The article provides a new way of achieving this, using Skowronek's four contexts and providing the first systematic approach to assessing success for his four types of president. The article also compares the efficacy of moderate and active presidential stances within each type.

**The Nature of Presidential Success**

Assigning the label "success" to presidents is difficult as single presidential actions regularly contain elements of success and failure. Some presidential actions that appear successful in the short-term may later have negative consequences. (Masciulli, Molachinov and Knight 2009: 10). Presidents may achieve desired outcomes but create significant negative side effects. In a complex political system, we cannot even be certain that particular outcomes

we observe are actually the result of presidential action ('t Hart 2011: 324). Naturally, the blurring of success and failure is more evident when examining entire presidencies. Despite this complexity, the task of understanding presidential success is worth pursuing.

Success is seen either as objective, with endeavours judged successful if they achieve desired outcomes, or it is seen as constructed and purely a matter of observers' interpretations. However, as McConnell argues in his work on policy success, these two forms of success co-exist (2010: 30-31). Policies, or in our case presidents, can achieve certain desired outcomes but that does not ensure people will judge them as successes (2010: 39). True success is both material and interpretive. Therefore, presidential rhetoric is crucial in shaping public opinions of actions as successes and as presidential successes. Presidents must win a rhetorical contest with political opponents to define their actions.

There are three forms of presidential success and both the material and interpretive realms are essential for each. The first is personal success, in which presidents effect outcomes they consider desirable and for which they gain credit. Personal success is typically observable in the short-term. It can be assessed through the attainment of policy goals, the maintenance of personal popularity, and re-election. Few if any personal successes are exclusively the result of a president's actions, but they redound to the president's benefit. The killing of Osama bin Laden enhanced Barack Obama's popularity and reputation because his decisions led to a publicly desired outcome. Yet, Obama could not personally ensure the mission's success. The administration released photos of Obama and other senior officials gathered in an operations room, reacting to the mission, which helped ensure the public saw Obama as central to the mission's success. Political achievements are always team

achievements, but these are "personal" successes as they involve significant presidential action and presidents gain credit for them.

The second form of success is partisan regime success. This refers to how presidents interact with the regime, either strengthening or weakening it to situate their parties for future achievement. Partisan regime success is harder to observe than personal success, but is often more enduring. It usually leads to future success for the president's party, but as presidents' actions influence the strength and longevity of the regime, it also has a considerable effect on the nation's future. Depending on their affiliation with or opposition to the regime, presidents must advance and update, or attack and discredit regime ideas and institutions, as well as strengthening or weakening the coalition that supports them.

Normative success is the third form of presidential success. This is an elusive but essential concept. If presidents achieve their desired policy outcomes but harm the population, or damage the office of the presidency, they have failed as national leaders. Normative success has two elements, one being the need for presidents to improve and preserve society and work for the common good (see Hargrove 1998). The other is to preserve and uphold the Constitution and the office of the presidency itself. Political actors' understandings of the common good differ with their political beliefs. Examining normative success from presidents' points of view avoids making the observer's ideology the standard for judging presidents. This allows presidents to succeed normatively regardless of their party affiliation, provided that their actions are not harmful. This can be ensured if presidents act with respect for all citizens' rights (see Thompson 2010: 25-26). Assuming that presidents believe their preferred path is best for the people; affiliated leaders should defend or strengthen the regime, while opposed leaders should weaken and overthrow it.

The second, Constitutional element of normative success requires that presidents preserve public trust in the office of the presidency and of the broader system of government. Presidents should preserve or improve the Constitutional character of the office and the democratic character of society (Thompson 2010: 24). They must act with respect for due process and the traditions of national government (Thompson 2010: 26-27). The Constitution provides much of the legitimacy that enables presidential action, and the other institutions of government help moderate presidents' ethical failings (Kane and Patapan 2012). Therefore, preserving these institutions is paramount in ensuring future good leadership.

**Presidents of Reconstruction**

The common association of reconstructive presidents with judgments of success (Nichols 2012) is unsurprising. Unlike the other three leadership types, reconstructive leaders can achieve all three forms of success and even find them mutually reinforcing. Reconstructive presidents' repudiation of past practice affords them the authority to redefine national governing commitments and achieve significant policy goals. Furthermore, as the opposition party is tied to the old failed regime, repudiation and redefinition discredit the opposing party. That party is usually divided about its future course (McCaffrie 2012). The opposition's parlous state makes it ineffective in Congress and in countering reconstructive presidents' ideas and coalition building, helping those presidents achieve personal and partisan regime success. Typically, the reconstructive presidents' parties are more successful in presidential and congressional elections in subsequent decades, allowing it to achieve policy goals and maintain reconstructive presidents' prior successes. Thus, personal and partisan regime success reinforce each other.

As regimes have died, society has experienced negative consequences. The situation calls for active leadership that reinvigorates the nation and naturally leads to personal and partisan regime success. These presidents have the greatest opportunity to implement something approaching their vision of good society. The reconstructive presidents, Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt[6] and Ronald Reagan, are frequently praised for revitalizing the country, despite not necessarily being effective at solving the problems that gave them authority (Skowronek 1997: 37). Yet, material achievement is important as material success makes it easier for presidents to convince publics that their actions are successful.

Similarly, these presidents' actions stimulate support for the presidency as an institution, and for the political system. The moral and political failures of presidents from Lyndon Johnson to Jimmy Carter diminished belief in the capacity of the presidency and of American government. Reagan's reconstruction recovered public faith in the presidency (Wilentz 2008: 226-234); however the Iran-Contra scandal undermined his normative success. Despite the negative public response, Reagan's reconstructive status made him 'curiously untouchable' (Skowronek 1997: 424-425). This example suggests a complex public understanding of ethical and constitutional concerns in which success in restoring faith in the constitutional order can outweigh later improprieties. Therefore we can expect that reconstructive leaders are more likely to be forgiven their indiscretions. However, in assessing Reagan, an examination of both his material failures and interpretive successes is necessary.

For reconstructive leaders, success in all three forms relies upon their completion of the reconstruction. Nichols and Myers describe three tasks

[6] To avoid confusion, Franklin Roosevelt is referred to as FDR and Theodore Roosevelt as TR throughout this article.

essential for completing a reconstruction (2010: 815-816). Reconstructive leadership success can be assessed using a more complex version of these tasks. The most important divergence from Nichols and Myers' own description is that they conceptualise the tasks as being either completed or not completed. But completion of the tasks can be conceptualised on a continuum, meaning that presidents can complete the tasks to a greater or lesser extent and we can compare their relative success at each task.

Shifting the main axis of partisan cleavage is the first task. It requires that reconstructive presidents raise 'the salience of a new political cleavage' (Nichols and Myers 2010: 815). A more complex reading of the task acknowledges that it involves repudiating the prior regime, defining the new one and defeating opponents' alternatives. Both FDR and Reagan easily defeated the opposition's rhetorical alternatives. The public still blamed the opposition parties for national economic problems and those parties were internally divided. This largely reflected the fact that both FDR and Reagan had so effectively repudiated the prior orthodoxy. FDR's 1932 election campaign vehemently attacked Herbert Hoover and the Republican leadership for their economic policies, fuelling an inaccurate public conception of Hoover as inactive against the Great Depression. However, FDR did little to explain his own alternatives beyond vague appeals to the impoverished "forgotten man" (Burns 1956: 142-144). This vagueness reflected the genuine incoherence of his program and his desire to appeal to everybody. Conversely, Reagan's rhetorical repudiation was simple, tying the Carter presidency and the liberal state-building orthodoxy together in arguing that 'government is the problem'. He offered a clear vision of individual freedom and smaller government. He not only changed the partisan cleavage, he made clear what it would become. In this particular task, Reagan was more successful than FDR.

The second task requires the assembly of a new majority partisan coalition. This involves ensuring a stable majority of interests supports the regime (Nichols and Myers 2010: 816). In addition to Nichols and Myers' description of this task, presidents need to ensure a stable majority coalition in the legislature. Usually, coalition groups disagree on various issues but a reconstructive leader unites them behind the larger cause of the reconstruction. A broad definition of the regime project in the first task allows a greater number and variety of groups to join the coalition ensuring numerical superiority, at least in the short term. However, broader coalitions are harder to maintain.

FDR's pragmatism made defining his new regime difficult but it made establishing a coalition easier. As Brinkley notes, the New Deal 'seemed to have something in it to please everyone except those who sought a discernible ideological foundation' (1998: 18). The New Deal simultaneously appealed to liberals and labourers in northern cities, farmers, lower income earners, African-Americans and conservative southern Democrats (Badger 1989: 246). Despite the internal contradictions of this coalition, FDR's methods ensured that it remained strong. New Deal programs largely operated through local administrations, allowing southern leaders to operate those federal programs in ways that appealed to southern conservatives (Brinkley 1998: 65).

FDR's New Deal also helped build constituent groups of the coalition. The implementation of the National Recovery Administration in 1933, and the Wagner Act of 1935, encouraged the organisation of labour as an interest group (Plotke 1996: 144-149). Similarly, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) of 1933 strengthened farm groups. By 1935, the farmers were a powerful enough lobby group to ensure their preferred elements of the now unconstitutional AAA were reinstituted in new constitutionally

acceptable legislation (Brinkley 1998: 31). FDR deserves significant credit for building the coalition that sustained Democratic supremacy for decades.

Reagan was less successful at maintaining a workable majority coalition. He led a strong conservative coalition, primarily of white voters in the Sunbelt and disillusioned socially conservative former Democrats in northern cities. Prevalent in this latter group were Catholics with Irish, Italian and Eastern European heritage (Schaller 2007: 1, Laing 2012). The coalition also included political and business elites who supported supply-side economics and free trade (Sloan 1999: 59-67). However, this core was never strong enough to help Reagan win a House majority. For some legislative items, Reagan received the support of conservative southern Democrats (Wilentz 2008: 143-144), but this support was inconsistent. The 1981-1982 recession ensured that southern Democrats, and even many Republicans, gave Reagan less support (Sinclair 1985: 297-300).

The legislative weakness of Reagan's coalition made the third of Nichols and Myers' tasks, institutionalizing the regime, more difficult. Institutionalisation involves destroying elements of the existing machinery of government and creating or redesigning others so that the operations of government support the new regime (Orren and Skowronek 1998: 698-701, Nichols and Myers 2010: 816). The continuation of the regime becomes an issue of "normal" politics, not partisan debate. For FDR, this meant building government agencies to administer new governmental functions. For example, the Social Security Board administered new welfare state functions (Brinkley 1998: 23). Social security would always be comparatively easy to institutionalise, as once its payments existed removal would eliminate benefits to which people had become accustomed. The Wagner Act's National Labor Relations Board reformed labour relations, reducing industrial conflicts' propensity to incite

extensive societal unrest (Plotke 1996: 91). Again, such a widely felt improvement would be difficult to remove.

By contrast, Reagan's smaller government approach required him to remove existing programs and benefits. As Pierson notes, this is psychologically more difficult for voters and recipients to accept (1996: 145-146). Institutionalisation was especially difficult for Reagan because other than a period of consistent success in his first year, passing his preferred legislation was difficult. Even the significant gains of 1981 gave way to significant losses in the latter years of his presidency. The 1981 tax cuts, central to Reagan's program, were all but reversed by tax increases of 1982 and 1984, made necessary by the growing budget deficit (Heclo 2008: 562). While Reagan had some success in institutionalizing deregulation (see Cook and Polsky 2005), his chief impact was rhetorical. 'He created a political atmosphere in which Republican opposition to taxes, always a creed, became a militant mantra' (Hargrove 2003: 29). This shift in the political logic meant any changes that suggested "big government" were almost unthinkable. However, this is the result of his success in shifting the axis of partisan cleavage, not institutionalizing his regime. FDR's greater success in the second and third reconstructive tasks made him a more successful reconstructive president than Reagan, allowing him greater and more enduring personal success and ensuring that his partisan regime success was more complete.

For reconstructive leaders, assessments of all three forms of success require that they complete Nichols and Myers' three tasks to a high level. It is normatively important to replace an enervated regime with one that can reinvigorate national politics, and doing so also provides partisan regime and personal success. Normative success requires regime implementation proceed by upholding ethical standards and preserving constitutional forms. Reagan's failings over Iran-Contra and FDR's over his unsuccessful efforts to "pack" the

Supreme Court each reflect poorly on these presidents in this realm, but on balance each left the presidency a more capable institution than it was when they took office.

Of Skowronek's leadership types, reconstructive presidents have the least excuse to fail on this particular measure, and can be judged more harshly for doing so. As shown in Table 2, all three forms of success are available to reconstructive presidents who take an active, rather than moderate, leadership stance. More cautious presidents do not capitalise fully on their opportunities and limit their success in all three forms.

| Reconstructive President | Personal | Partisan Regime | Normative |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Active strategy** | Available | Available | Available |
| **Moderate strategy** | Possible, but less than an active strategy allows | Difficult to achieve | Fails to adequately reinvigorate society |

Table 2. Types of success available to reconstructive presidents.

**Articulation**

As regime affiliates, articulators lack the authority to redesign politics, limiting their material personal successes and the extent to which they can achieve interpretive success. Reconstructive presidents have already tackled the highest priority policy questions, so articulators must address new issues and problems that the reconstructive president ignored or failed to address. Articulators struggle to maintain the regime's vitality as even its successes cause societal changes which make its messages less relevant. The New Deal

regime's appeal to the unemployed was less salient a generation later given its success at reducing unemployment (Plotke 1996: 62). Elements of the coalition have little reason to support the regime once their goals have been achieved (Plotke 1996: 47). Typically, a presidency of articulation results in the achievement of some additional policy goals but a weaker regime with a more fractured coalition.

Articulators can take advantage of new issues that arise as avenues for policy and legislative success. Such issues can provide a way to 'fit the existing parts of the regime together in a new and more relevant way' (Skowronek 1997: 41). Lyndon Johnson's Great Society modernised the New Deal regime with a civil rights and anti-poverty agenda that reinvigorated the regime and created many personal successes. However, recasting the regime often aggravates previously dormant coalition tensions. Many southern Democrats accepted New Deal economic programs, but not Johnson's civil rights agenda (Dallek 1998: 109). Johnson's personal successes accelerated the demise of the coalition and the weakening of the regime. Similarly, Theodore Roosevelt's determination to increase government regulation of business, although applied gradually, recast governmental priorities and exacerbated a Republican Party schism (Morris 2001: 427). As Skowronek explains, the orthodox innovation that articulators like Johnson and TR advance is an 'oxymoron'; a 'leadership charge at odds with itself' (2008: 135-136). This is reflected in the conflict between personal and partisan regime success; presidents of articulation cannot be wholly successful in both of these forms.

The extent to which articulators seek to redefine politics is pivotal. An active stance encourages personal success, but damages the coalition, while a more moderate stance limits personal success but can retain coalition support for longer. Articulators must discern the limits of their opportunities in making this decision. Johnson overestimated his ability to maintain a vibrant coalition,

as he failed to understand that the new interest groups he courted representing women, minorities and environmentalists, were inherently resistant to president-led action (Milkis 2005: 15). By contrast, TR was aware that he did not have the same opportunities as Lincoln (Skowronek 1997: 228), but he sought to make the most of his context by managing his party's increasingly conflicting conservative and progressive wings. He moderated his stance in his first term as a result of the Congressional strength of the conservative Republicans (Mowry 1958: 115-123). TR did not act on tariff reform, a pivotal issue at the time, largely because of the potential to split his party (Morris 2001: 422). However, his more expansive second term action, including extensive railroad and business regulation, empowered the radical progressive Republicans at the conservatives' expense. The conservatives reacted, especially after the 1907 recession. TR's actions exacerbated party tensions, handing William Howard Taft a near impossible challenge simply to keep the party together (Skowronek 1997: 254).

Normative success in its abstract is an uncontroversial goal, but for presidents of articulation it is difficult to define. Articulators must seek to prolong the regime as this helps maintain their version of good society. Yet, completing the goals of the regime encourages its destruction. The fundamental paradox of articulation thus extends to its normative success. The rift Johnson created between southern and liberal Democrats helped Reagan's later repudiation of the New Deal regime (Shribman 2005: 240). In Constitutional terms, Johnson was the first of a string of presidents who reduced public faith in the presidency and more generally in government (Alford 2001: 41); much of this loss of faith was a response to the failure of the Vietnam War. TR is commonly credited with enhancing the institution of the presidency by increasing its power and capacity (Gould 1989).

This article suggests that long-term forms of success should take priority over immediate forms. Articulators must therefore focus on maintaining the vibrancy and relevance of the regime. This allows articulators to enjoy some personal success and to encourage the same for like-minded successors. This focus on maintaining the regime means articulators should be analysed in terms of the three regime components identified by that Nichols and Myers identified. Articulators must update the regime, manage coalition members, institutionalise any new regime achievements and maintain the existing regime institutions. However, they are unlikely to achieve unmitigated success.

Articulators sensitive to the limitations of their situation can avoid or delay many of the worst consequences of their context. TR's moderate first term stance encouraged the regime's continuation, allowing normative and regime success. The longer term nature of success available to more moderate articulators suggests that this course is preferable. Incremental progress should make it easier to maintain the support of sceptical members of the coalition as it did during TR's first term. This suggests a balancing act. Failure to capitalise on opportunities to implement regime policies will likely also damage the coalition. As Table 3 shows, the moderate approach reduces opportunities for personal success but allows more important longer-term partisan regime success. Neither strategy seems inherently more likely to deliver normative success.

| President of Articulation | Personal | Partisan Regime | Normative |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Active strategy** | Possible, but less extensive than for reconstructors | Limited | Possible, but less extensive than for reconstructors |
| **Moderate strategy** | Limited | Possible, but less extensive than for reconstructors | Possible, but less extensive than for reconstructors |

Table 3. Types of success available to presidents of articulation.

**Pre-emption**

The types of success that are available to pre-emptive leaders vary depending on strategy. Most pre-emptors pursue an active path, fighting to change elements of the regime against vigorous defence. Regime defenders use their strength in the other institutions of government to attack such presidents, condemning them for flaws of character, and in two cases (Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton) impeaching them[7] (Skowronek 1997: 43, Crockett 2002).

Dwight Eisenhower chose a different strategy, exercising caution and moderation. He accepted major parts of the New Deal legacy and downplayed his role in policy changes (Greenstein 1994), subduing regime adherents' reactions to his presidency. Eisenhower's uncommonly consistent popularity led Skowronek to label him 'the most successful of our pre-emptive leaders to date' (Skowronek 1997: 450). Crockett (2002: 130) and Harris (1997: 334) each came to the same conclusion. However, these analyses privilege personal success over other forms. Skowronek notes that Eisenhower's was a 'personal'

[7] Richard Nixon would have been a third impeached pre-emptive president had he not resigned.

success (1997: 451) and Crockett explains that Eisenhower 'was personally popular ... [but] unsuccessful as party leader' (2002: 130). Also, as we know Eisenhower was far more conservative in his beliefs than in his actions and achievements (Greenstein 1994: 49-52), we may question even the extent of his personal and normative success.

The moderate path helps pre-emptive presidents in negotiations with an ascendant opposition party in Congress, and in maintaining personal popularity, but it does little to help their standing in their parties. Eisenhower was resented by the "Old Guard" Republicans who sought a strong repudiation of the New Deal (Ambrose 1984: 624). While he sought to modernise the Republican party, and adapt it to the context to prime it for future victories, he enjoyed only fleeting success, as demonstrated by the Republicans' 1964 nomination of the highly conservative Barry Goldwater as presidential candidate (Price 2002: 628). Eisenhower's presidency put the party in no better position for future partisan regime success.

Eisenhower exercised restraint because of his sense of the party's long-term interest. Writing to his brother he explained, 'Should any political party attempt to abolish social security, unemployment insurance, and eliminate labor laws and farm programs, you would not hear of that party again' (Eisenhower 1954). Nevertheless, there is a difference between a total assault on a popular regime and a measured effort to weaken it. In practice Eisenhower's strategy achieved neither. Although the New Deal regime hardly flourished under his presidency (Harris 1997: 338), Eisenhower extended social security and active labour market policies (Wilson 2009). On balance he did more to entrench than to hinder the New Deal regime, and therefore he cannot be considered a success in partisan regime terms.

In normative terms, Crockett argues that pre-emptive leaders should pursue a moderate course that enhances both personal and "system" success (2002: 203-246). My position conflicts with his because Crockett does not distinguish between the partisan regime and permanent Constitutional arrangements in his system success (2002: 242-243). The present analysis suggests it is ideal, although difficult, for pre-emptive presidents to disrupt the partisan regime but preserve constitutional integrity. The normative argument for maintaining the regime is curious given that Eisenhower feared the New Deal's consequences. He believed it created 'inefficient government, centralization of power in the federal government at the peril of the states, "creeping socialism," and paternalism' (Harris 1997: 336). If his normative duty was to bring about a vision of good society, then a strategy of moderation seems wholly inadequate. Crockett is correct in arguing that a frontal assault on the regime will diminish presidents' personal success. Yet a more judicious and selective strategy to weaken the regime is possible.

Comparing Eisenhower with fellow pre-emptor, Richard Nixon reveals much about normative success for such presidents. Nixon followed a more active strategy than Eisenhower, although it was hardly a blind assault on the regime. Like Eisenhower, he protected or advanced elements of the New Deal regime, with some adaptation to appeal to conservatives. His Family Assistance Plan would have provided a system of guaranteed income rather than welfare, expanding federal bureaucratic capacity but emphasizing self-sufficiency. While Nixon eventually considered the plan too expensive and preferred to see Congressional Democrats block it rather than pass it in its entirety, the elements that were enacted provided a guaranteed minimum income for the elderly, blind and disabled (Small 1999: 188-190).

Unlike Eisenhower, Nixon also found ways to undermine the New Deal regime. His Philadelphia Plan required government contractors in

Philadelphia to meet employment quotas in hiring African-American workers. The plan advanced civil rights but while African-Americans supported it, labour unions opposed it. Nixon privately expressed excitement about its potential to fracture the alliance between African-Americans and labour (Yuill 2006: 144-145). The plan did damage the Democratic coalition, albeit modestly (Frymer and Skrentny 1998: 146), and improved the Republicans' future chances of removing the regime. Ultimately, African-American leaders and labour leaders remained allies, but Nixon's efforts encouraged a growing Republican coalition encompassing southern whites and blue collar workers, who felt estranged by the Democrats' civil rights agenda (Frymer and Skrentny 1998: 159, Schaller 2007: 19).

Nixon's small steps towards dismantling the Democratic coalition helped the Republicans regain control and reconstruct politics less than a decade later (Graham 1996: 104). The similarities between the groups Nixon appealed to and those that formed Reagan's reconstructive coalition are striking. In terms of bringing about a vision of good society, Nixon was more successful than Eisenhower who did not capitalise upon his popularity to diminish the Democratic regime, despite believing it was damaging the country.

The Watergate scandal demonstrated that Nixon was a profound failure by other normative measures. He eschewed constitutional practice and damaged perceptions of the presidency, making it harder for Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter to positively employ the powers of office. In this aspect of normative success Eisenhower was far superior. Greenstein's observation that he was a successful head of state, not just of government (1994: 5) is useful and parallels Galston's observation that as head of state, a president should unite the country and challenge it to greater aspirations (2010: 96). Pre-emptive presidents who take active stances are more likely to be ethical failures. The greater difficulty they have in achieving their ends encourages them to

circumvent normal practices, although such ethical failure is hardly inevitable (see Kane and Patapan 2012: 70).

For longer-term success pre-emptive presidents should act to discredit the regime ideas and institutions, and to use the internal contradictions in the regime coalition to weaken their support for the regime. As Table 4 shows, the different strategies encourage different types of success and failure in pre-emptive presidencies. Arguments can be made for following either strategy. In normative terms, ethical and constitutional failures are less forgivable than failures to implement a president's vision of good society, but ethical failures are not inevitable for either strategy. Neither strategy is ideal, but given the active path's greater opportunities for partisan regime success, that path gives slightly greater opportunities for success than the moderate one.

| President of Pre-emption | Personal | Partisan Regime | Normative |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Active strategy** | Available, but less likely than the moderate strategy allows | Available, largely in terms of weakening the existing regime | Available in implementing a vision of good society, but greater constitutional risk |
| **Moderate strategy** | Available but limited, especially in policy terms | No | Available constitutionally. Less in implementing good society |

Table 4. Types of success available to presidents of pre-emption.

### Disjunction

A disjunction is by its very nature a regime failure, as regime ideas prove incapable of solving pressing problems. Supporters have little reason to

remain active coalition members, as their goals have either been achieved or the regime has failed them. The governing party is usually divided over how to respond to the regime's decay. Superficially, the prospects for all three forms of success appear limited. Yet disjunctive presidents can achieve significant personal success. House Speaker, Thomas P. O'Neill considered Jimmy Carter's first hundred days among the most productive he witnessed (Skowronek 1997: 380). Herbert Hoover also secured most of his major legislative proposals (Burner 1974: 54). These presidents each took innovative steps that their reconstructive successors built upon. In Carter's case, deregulatory measures and tighter monetary control; in Hoover's, countercyclical interventions designed to fight the Depression (Fausold 1985: 75). However, each received little credit for these efforts because disjunctive leaders struggle to control the public understanding of their actions and therefore to enjoy interpretive success.

Disjunctive leaders are in a poor position to exercise rhetorical leadership. If they suggest a break from past practice they upset supporters, if they suggest continuity they are attacked by a resurgent opposition. Greenstein argues Carter struggled rhetorically because of 'the absence of organizing principles in his program' (2001: 140). Describing clear organizing principles is problematic when attempting to appeal to an increasingly narrow middle ground. Thus, disjunctive leaders like Carter and Hoover embrace technique as a method of persuasion, claiming to possess unique problem solving abilities (Skowronek 1997: 40). This method means they must actually solve complex political problems, not just for material success but also for interpretive success. However, the difficulty of solving the types of economic problems Hoover and Carter faced is enormous.

Disjunctive presidents usually face major crises which define their presidencies. If handled well, these crises provide opportunities for disjunctive

presidents to enhance their authority. Hoover's response to the stock market crash of 1929 is regularly criticised for insufficient rhetorical effort, but his silence was a psychological attempt to convince the people that there was no crisis and to spur normal financial behaviour, thereby aiding recovery. His strategy succeeded briefly but as the crisis continued, his apparent absence undermined the confidence he sought to instil (Houck 2000: 156), and ensured that the Great Depression eroded his authority rather than enhancing it.

Carter similarly failed to capitalise on opportunities to enhance his authority. Presidents experience honeymoon periods in their first months, when they are popular and Congress more frequently supports them (Farnsworth and Lichter 2011: 592). Carter squandered this opportunity in an effort to reduce government spending. He removed funding from several water resource projects and altered several others. The principle of the action was important to him, but the projects themselves were fairly small. Carter frustrated many of the Democratic Congressional leaders, creating a difficult relationship with them that endured throughout his presidency (Biven 2002: 81). Additionally, the compromise bill he eventually accepted undermined his claims to be a different, more principled president (Sloan 1999: 43-44). Thus, in a historical context that would provide little authority, Carter's actions exacerbated this problem. All presidents must capitalise on opportunities to enhance authority but it is especially important for disjunctive leaders, given their constrained situation.

The virtually inexorable decay of the regime means that partisan regime success is unavailable to disjunctive presidents. Furthermore, their prospects for normative success are bleak. Disjunctive leaders cannot reinvigorate politics by saving or removing the regime. They typically face crises that threaten citizens' living standards and limit their ability to institute a vision of good society. Judged on their own standards they appear to be normative

failures. However, disjunctive leaders play an important role in creating a new regime, and on this role we can assess their performance.

Hargrove created a typology of presidential leadership based on irregular historical cycles. His work is less complex than Skowronek's, dividing presidents into three categories: presidents of achievement, of consolidation and of preparation (Hargrove 1998: 63). Although his description of presidents of preparation elaborates little beyond this title, the idea that presidents of preparation are important in the subsequent creation of regimes is invaluable. For Hargrove, presidents of preparation are of accidental utility. For example, Carter attempted 'to bring the Democratic coalition back to the ideological and programmatic centre and unwittingly paved the way for Ronald Reagan' (Hargrove 1998: 63). Disjunctive presidents can make purposeful contributions. Carter and Hoover[8] both engaged in policy experimentation that preceded and assisted reconstructive change. Disjunctive leaders' experimentation allows reconstructive leaders to build on their advances.

Carter was more aware of the danger of inflation than most Democrats in Congress (Hargrove 1988: 69). However, reflecting on his presidency he wished he had acted more strongly against inflation from the outset (Biven 2002: 11). In his last two years, Carter clearly prioritised inflation over unemployment. He publicly admitted that his administration was trying several anti-inflation measures with no certainty that any would work (Morgan 2004: 1018-1019). Unexpectedly, Carter's deregulation efforts, not originally part of the anti-inflation strategy, were most effective in reducing inflation. Other policies such as wage and price guidelines and fiscal restraint had no real effect (Morgan 2004: 1023-1024). Carter also turned to tighter monetary policy to control inflation, appointing Paul Volcker, a strong

[8] Curiously, Hargrove considered Hoover a president of consolidation, although he acknowledged that Hoover helped prepare the way for Roosevelt's achievements.

advocate of such a strategy, as Federal Reserve chairman (Morgan 2004: 1026-1027). The changing economic policy continued into the Reagan administration, with further deregulation and monetary restraint central elements of Reagan's strategy. Reagan benefited from Carter's experimentation and policy changes but had the experimentation started earlier, Reagan could have benefited more.

Hoover was once much criticised for doing nothing to combat the Depression (Romasco 1974), but he too experimented with economic policy before FDR's New Deal. Hoover trialled unsuccessful measures to combat the crisis, built on voluntary business cooperation. His National Credit Corporation (NCC) in 1931 was to be run by prominent bankers, using bank funds to provide loans to struggling banks. The NCC bankers proved too conservative, loaning too little to make a difference (Butkiewicz 1995: 199). In 1932, after three years of refusing to entertain government spending to fight the Depression, Hoover relented, signing the Emergency Relief and Construction Act into law. This Act empowered the recently created Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) to make major loans to states, municipalities and corporations, although Hoover insisted the funds be for self-liquidating projects (Sautter 1986: 83). This experimental venture did not grant significant personal success because of 'the absence of political supporters willing to credit Hoover's creativity' (Skowronek 1997: 282). Furthermore, his insistence that public works be self-liquidating limited the stimulation of business.

In other respects, Hoover rigidly adhered to past practice. He refused to abandon the gold standard or balanced budgets and, after his 1932 election, attempted to prevent FDR from doing so (Eichengreen and Temin 2000: 203-204). The early years of the New Deal saw FDR benefiting from the institutional architecture of the RFC, greatly expanding its operations and

capacity (Todd 1992: 25-26). But as Hoover's experimentation was limited, so was his benefit to FDR who experimented for several years himself.

It is hard for disjunctive leaders to have a positive impact on perceptions of the presidency. They obtain little interpretive success and struggle to galvanise public support. Often they cannot meet their claims to competence in practice, thereby diminishing faith in the office and political process (Skowronek 1997: 40). Even in ethical terms disjunctive leaders are at a disadvantage. When people consider leaders to be effective, they are more likely to judge them as ethically correct (Ciulla and Forsyth 2011: 233). Disjunctive leaders are generally considered ineffective. Therefore, it is unsurprising that minor scandals in Carter's administration were treated harshly by opponents and media, whereas the Reagan administration overcame many more serious indiscretions (Sloan 1999: 42-43).

As the normative benefit to a presidency of disjunction lies in experimentation, these leaders should provide active leadership that explores multiple possibilities. It is difficult to compare the quality of experimentation between disjunctive presidencies, but the quantity of experimentation is important. The earlier that disjunctive presidents understand the nature of their position and begin experimenting, the better for their successors and potentially for their ability to influence their successors' course. However, it is difficult firstly, to discern the limitations of the disjunctive situation and secondly to act vigorously in directions not agreed to by the president's own party. As Table 5 shows, the opportunities for disjunctive presidential success are very limited but an active strategy is far superior to a cautious one.

| President of Disjunction | Personal | Partisan Regime | Normative |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Active strategy** | Some, but concrete rather than interpretive | No | Possible through experimentation. |
| **Moderate strategy** | Limited | No | Limited without substantial experimentation |

Table 5. Types of success available to presidents of pre-emption.

## Conclusion

Skowronek's conception of the presidency may seem a strange basis for analysing presidential success. Presidential success by its nature implies agency, and Skowronek has attracted criticism from some who considered his work deterministic (Arnold 1995, Hoekstra 1999). There is, however, considerable space for agency within his work. More importantly, his attention to structure allows us to observe that where historical contexts differ, the capacity for agency and therefore for success differ. This allows us to explore how success varies in different situations. Furthermore, it avoids conflating presidents' structural advantage with successful performance.

Improving our ability to assess the different types of presidential success is an ongoing empirical and methodological challenge and one that can only be met with diverse methods. Quantitative measures can help us understand the more material aspects of personal success, such as approval ratings and legislative success rates. Unfortunately, some of these measures are harder to apply to presidents before widespread political polling appeared.

Additionally, rhetorical analysis is more obviously appropriate for assessing presidents' roles in ensuring their interpretive success.

Regime success is also difficult to quantify. Electoral results and demographic voting patterns can give an outline of the strength of a regime but elections are often determined by other short-term factors. Close historical analysis is required to understand the relationships between presidents and regime supporters and among different groups of supporters. Presidential rhetoric must be examined to understand how presidents position themselves with respect to the regime. Analyses of normative success lend themselves to constitutional, ethical and psychological perspectives on the presidency. Here Bowles' (1999) observation that the complexity of the presidency demands the application of all branches of political studies is apt.

While we are accustomed to the argument that the opportunities for action are limited for leaders in certain historical circumstances, this has had minimal effect on how presidential success is analysed. Presidents in different historical contexts should be assessed as qualitatively different; we should not expect them all to perform similar actions and obtain similar outcomes. When success is divided into its personal, partisan regime and normative forms, it is apparent that in many situations different aspects of success are unavailable. The trade-offs that some leaders must make leads us to question which aspects of success we prefer presidents to seek, and thus what exactly we want from the presidency.

Understanding presidential success differently in different contexts is not just important for analytical purposes. Presumably all presidents wish to be considered successful, so public expectations can influence presidential actions. If we judge all presidents by standards appropriate to FDR we encourage them to act in a way that will frequently contribute to their failure.

More realistic public and expert expectations of presidents can lead to more realistic presidential attitudes. This diminishes the chances of presidential failure and diminishes the prospect of significant negative outcomes for citizens.

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## Conclusion: Framing Success in Political Time

Political scholars since Aristotle have advised leaders how to do their jobs. Aristotle focused on leaders need to exercise prudence, or practical wisdom to balance the competing interests of society. Centuries later Machiavelli drew on his personal experience and counselled leaders to act with strategy and pragmatism. In the 20th century, Neustadt's highly influential work on the American presidency similarly drew on his practical experience as an adviser to President Harry Truman, arguing that soft power and persuasion would best enable presidents to accomplish political goals. Theoretical accounts of political leadership often offer advice to leaders usually based on the actions of particular leaders with strong reputations, rather than on a systematic understanding of what comprises success (for example Burns 1978, 2003).

Without a systematic understanding of what success is for political leaders, 'leadership prescriptions are prescriptions without a diagnosis' ('t Hart 2011: 324). This thesis will help political scholars who wish to offer advice tailored towards success. Furthermore, it can help scholars to better understand how political leaders act and how they should act. The historical contextual approach taken here illuminates often ignored constraints and opportunities that act on individual political leaders. Finally, the creation of criteria for understanding success enables a deeper understanding of the general nature of political leadership. Knowing what success is for political leaders allows us greater confidence in explaining how they achieve it.

This thesis has argued that successful political leadership requires different behaviours from leaders at different times. Furthermore, success means different things at different times. For some leaders success requires great change and progress, for others it requires steady management, while for

another category success can be more about avoiding great losses than great achievements.

Historical context plays a significant role in shaping leaders' opportunities for action, so to assess all leaders by the same criteria equates success with structural advantage when we should be more concerned with leaders' performance. The historical context shapes societal interest and therefore shapes the type of leadership that is in societal interest. To encourage leadership that meets the requirements of society we must expect different actions in varying contexts and must judge leaders of varying contexts by different criteria.

This concluding chapter draws on the preceding peer-reviewed articles to provide four frameworks for understanding successful political leadership. The frameworks explain success for each of Skowronek's four leadership types (1997), and have significant broader implications for understanding political leadership. The latter sections of the chapter discuss these implications as well as the thesis' implications for how we study politics.

**The Historical Contextual Frameworks of Successful Political Leadership**

Success is both interpretive and material (McConnell 2010: 30-31). This means that political leaders must actually achieve goals and must ensure that the public interprets their achievements; first as successes and secondly as the leaders' successes rather than those of other political actors. The interpretive and material realms of success interact. Those leaders who are perceived as successful gain in authority and are thus more capable of future material successes. On close inspection, leaders' material achievements often vary less than observers' impressions of those achievements. Those with greater authority as a result of their historical context are in a better position to achieve interpretive success although this does not mean that interpretive

success is determined by context. The material and interpretive realms of success are highlighted throughout the frameworks below, as are the different interactions between oppositions and government leaders on each aspect of success. The relative strength of oppositions confronting government leaders is a crucial factor in assessing success for each of the leadership types.

There are three forms of success pertinent to political leaders: personal success, partisan regime success and normative success. Partisan regime success is central as it allows leaders to have a longer term effect. This form of success varies the most in how we examine success for the four different types of leader. Personal and normative success mostly vary by degrees of availability and only to a limited extent in terms of the criteria that must be examined. Furthermore, the difference in the degrees of the availability of personal and normative success is more pronounced in interpretive rather than material ways. This is revealing, as it suggests that leaders' concrete achievements are often greater than observers recognise. Studies of political leaders that make systematic use of historical context to explain their success and failure could restore the reputations of many of these leaders.

**Historical Contextual Framework for Analysing Reconstructive Leadership**

*Personal success*

Table 1 contains the material and interpretive factors relevant to analysing success for reconstructive leaders. The factors that make up personal success (election victories, passing legislation, and popularity and reputation both during and after the leader's tenure) are the same for reconstructive leaders and for the other three types. However, reconstructive leaders have the greatest opportunity to achieve success in these criteria. In part this results from the weak oppositions they tend to face, which are frequently internally divided. This encourages reconstructive leaders to achieve in almost all of the

relevant boxes in Table 1. Election victories are easier against divided opponents, as is passing legislation. When oppositions are divided they have little ability to create their own interpretive success in the factors on the right hand side of the table, as they cannot focus on one consistent message. Naturally, weak oppositions do not guarantee reconstructive leaders' success on these criteria. Each criterion requires that reconstructive leaders act positively to manage their supporters and to promote a positive interpretation of their actions.

| | **Material** | **Interpretive** |
|---|---|---|
| **Elections** | Results | |
| **Legislation passed** | Quantity, importance of legislation | Create perception that it is a success, and that it is the leader's success |
| **Popularity/Reputation** | | Polling, position in rankings studies |

Table 1. Personal Success for Reconstructive Leaders.

If we were only to examine personal success and to neglect historical context, we would conclude that reconstructive leaders were more successful than all others. Once we expand the definition of success to include the partisan regime and certain normative aspects, the importance of historical context is highlighted and we can see that reconstructive leaders achieve much because of their structural advantage.

Naturally, the factors in Table 1 interact with each other. Making legislative changes encourages popularity and a positive reputation, which aids leaders in elections. As Canes-Wrone and de Marchi show, for important issues with high public salience and complexity, US presidents' personal popularity correlates with legislative success (2002, also see Edwards 2003). Although the

nature of the contest of ideas is different for prime ministers, it is likely that high personal popularity and the prospect of winning elections will help prime ministers to maintain party discipline and to push through measures with which some in the party would disagree. Elections can be assessed in hard material terms, but election results clearly follow from other interpretive forms of success. In addition, these successes flow from the oppositions' inability to create their own interpretive successes. These oppositions appear unlikely to govern successfully and are therefore less likely to perform well at elections.

*Partisan Regime Success*

Table 2 illustrates the tasks that are relevant to reconstructive leaders' achievement of partisan regime success. The table was created in the third article of this thesis and is a more complex version of Nichols and Myers' three tasks of reconstruction (2010), with eight criteria making up the three tasks. Partisan regime success is the most important form of success for all types of leaders, but it is especially important for reconstructive leaders, as achieving this form of success makes them likely to be considered successful in both personal and normative terms.

Reconstructive leaders, like all others, must ensure that they achieve both material and interpretive success. Shifting the axis of partisan cleavage, which is represented in the left column of Table 2, is a task with vast interpretive consequences. Achieving this task changes the nature and terms of the national political debate. Repudiating the prior regime and framing crises to the leaders' advantage are rhetorical tasks that require the persuasion of the public. Leaders must explain the nature of problems experienced in society and explain the efficacy of the solution they provide. The material nature of societal problems shape the way leaders can frame crises and their solutions,

as well as shaping the ease with which leaders can advocate a major political and policy shift. Furthermore, the opposition usually provides an alternative explanation of the problem and its solution. Reconstructive leaders must ensure that they defeat any such alternative with a more persuasive explanation and plan.

| Shifting the Axis of Partisan Cleavage | Assembling a Majority Coalition | Institutionalisation |
|---|---|---|
| Repudiate prior regime, frame crisis to advantage | Build a legislative majority | Destroy prior institutions |
| Define the new regime | Build a social majority | Create new institutions/ redefine existing ones |
| Defeat opposition attempts to attack redefinition | | Entrench political advantage |

Table 2: Partisan Regime Success for Reconstructive Leaders.

The middle column of Table 2 shows Nichols and Myers second task, assembling a majority coalition. This thesis divides this task into two parts, building a legislative coalition and building a social coalition. Developing a majority coalition in the legislature is a different task for prime ministers than for presidents. Prime ministers usually lead disciplined parties and can rely on their votes in parliament, whereas US presidents often must obtain votes from members of the opposing party. This means that much of presidents' coalition building takes place in public view whereas prime ministers must first build the support of unconvinced members of their own parliamentary parties. Prime ministers must manage differences among factions and groupings of their parties to ensure a majority supports their measures. In examining this task, we should analyse presidents' ability to win important votes, and the

consistency of support they gain from important groupings within Congress. For prime ministers in Britain, the propensity for backbench revolts is crucial, whereas in Australia the evidence of internal dissent tends to express itself either through challenges to leaders' positions or through leaks of private party information. Prime ministers should be judged on their ability to prevent or quell such actions.

The social aspect of coalition building requires that reconstructive leaders bring together a group of societal interests for long term support of the new regime. This follows from the way leaders define their reconstructions. A definition must encourage the support of multiple groups for one broader cause, be it smaller government, the expansion of the welfare state or some other rearrangement of government and society. There is little difference between parliamentary and presidential systems, although diverging national societal divisions change the nature of the task. For example, the US' regional complexity necessitates different goals and messages to appeal to the south, the north and the mid-west in a manner that is less important in Australia. In examining this form of success we must examine the public support that crucial segments of society give to reconstructive policies and the extent to which they cooperate with the policies that affect them.

Institutionalisation, represented in the right column of Table 2, is a variable task. It alters depending on the nature of the regime that the reconstructive leader seeks to implement. Reconstructions such as Ronald Reagan's or Margaret Thatcher's that seek to reduce the state's role, are more difficult. In such circumstances, the opposition that builds against the reconstruction is not solely in Congress but also in the institutions that the reconstruction must remove or downgrade. Similarly, the segments of society that are interested in the success of particular institutions, for example welfare recipients or environmentalists, may form a broader societal opposition. Societal opposition

can arise against any type of reconstruction but opposition within institutions is less likely in a state building reconstruction. The successful completion of this task allows reconstructive policies to become normal matters of government and sees the policies themselves and their reorganisation of society endure for decades. Thus the legacy of reconstructive policies is a crucial measure of institutionalisation.

The tasks of partisan regime success are all ongoing. They must be maintained throughout reconstructive leaders' tenures. Should a coalition disintegrate before the regime is institutionalised, then a reconstruction will not happen at that time. The longer each of the reconstructive tasks is maintained, the more complete and harder to dislodge the new regime will be.

*Normative Success*

Normative success for reconstructive leaders requires that they complete their reconstructions, as that is the best way to bring about the reconstructive leaders' visions of good society. It also helps to reinvigorate the institutions of government, particularly the presidency, thereby contributing to the constitutional forms of success represented in the middle row of Table 3. Reconstructive leaders are less likely to be tainted by scandals than other types: they are viewed as effective and are therefore perceived as more authentic and honest, whether or not that is actually the case (Ciulla and Forsyth 2011: 233). Again, this highlights the difference between interpretive and material forms of success. Interpretive normative success is more easily obtainable for reconstructive leaders than for other types of leaders but material elements of normative success such as following due process and respecting citizens' rights are no more likely to be achieved by reconstructive leaders than by any other type.

The criteria of normative success, illustrated in Table 3, are similar for all leaders because many of these represent universal ethical concerns. Leaders must implement their vision of good society. For reconstructive leaders this is achieved by accomplishing their reconstructions. From a more ethical standpoint, leaders should respect due process and maintain the integrity of political processes. They must also respect the rights of their citizens in the decisions that they take (Thompson 2010: 25-26). All political leaders have an important role to play in ensuring that citizens maintain trust in the institutions of government. Blatant ethical failures, like Nixon's in Watergate, damage perceptions of government and political office, making the job of successors more difficult. Leaders who maintain, or even enhance the standing of government institutions make it easier for successors to utilise the powers of office for the benefit of the nation.

| | **Material** | **Interpretive** |
|---|---|---|
| **Good society** | Complete reconstruction | Encourage public support for reconstructive measures |
| **Institutions** | Respect due process, encourage strength in all institutions of government | Encourage public confidence in government, society |
| **Citizens** | Respect citizens' rights | Build personal trust with the public |

Table 3. Normative Success for Reconstructive Leaders.

The most obvious variation in the criteria of normative success among the different leadership types, is the way types of leaders implement their visions of good society. The effect of stronger opposition on non-reconstructive leaders also creates some diversity in the way normative actions are represented. The weak oppositions that confront reconstructive leaders are

less able to hold those leaders to account, contributing to their ability to overcome scandals. Other leaders do not have this advantage as they tend to face stronger oppositions, which are better able to hold leaders to account for such failings.

## Historical Contextual Framework for Analysing Leadership of Articulation

*Personal success*

Personal success is largely assessed in the same way for articulators as for reconstructive leaders, although expectations are not as high. The variation in the capacity of leaders to fulfil these tasks is one of the main reasons for separating the four types of leaders and examining them only against other leaders of their type. The strength of articulators' opponents varies, but they are generally stronger and more coherent oppositions than those facing reconstructive leaders. A stronger opposition makes each of the tasks represented in Table 4 more difficult. Legislative success is more difficult in both material and interpretive terms. Stronger oppositions are more able to argue against executive leaders' actions. The interaction between material and interpretive realms of success means that lesser success in one leads to lesser success in the other. Articulators are therefore less able to achieve all forms of success.

| | Material | Interpretive |
|---|---|---|
| **Elections** | Results | |
| **Legislation passed** | Quantity, importance of legislation | Create perception that it is a success, and that it is the leader's success |
| **Popularity/Reputation** | | Polling, position in rankings studies |

Table 4. Personal Success for Leaders of Articulation.

*Partisan Regime Success*

Articulators tasks in terms of partisan regime success, shown in Table 5, are notably shorter than those of reconstructive leaders. Many of the tasks reflect similar challenges but are about maintaining and updating rather than creating, renewing and destroying. The stronger opposition makes interpretive success harder to win in all tasks and makes defeating opposition attempts to attack the redefinition especially difficult. Adding to this problem, articulators generally have divisions within their own parties and coalitions to manage, as members of the legislative and social coalitions dispute the original intentions of the regime (Skowronek 1997: 41). This division means that articulators' rhetoric must appeal to two different branches of regime supporters. The leaders' opportunities for interpretive success are therefore limited as particular actions can only really appeal to one or other of the groups of supporters and will only be considered successful by those to whom the actions appeal.

| **Maintain the Axis of Partisan Cleavage** | **Majority Coalition** | **Institutionalisation** |
|---|---|---|
| Update regime definition | Maintain a social majority | Update institutions as necessary |
| Defeat opposition attempts to attack redefinition | Maintain a legislative majority | |

Table 5. Partisan Regime Success for Leaders of Articulation.

How articulators define their stance with respect to the regime is crucial. Some leaders, such as Lyndon Johnson, attempt to make a considerable revision of the regime and significantly update it. Others seek to retain more than they alter, as was the case for Calvin Coolidge. The articulators define their stance either as moderate or active, and in doing so open opportunities for some

forms of success but limit others. As discussed in the fourth article of the thesis, moderate leaders are more likely to keep their coalitions together but will have fewer personal successes, while active ones can have greater personal successes but are less likely to maintain the coalition in the long term. Furthermore, those who seek to update the regime must implement institutional changes to guarantee that the initiatives last.

*Normative Success*

Normative success should be assessed similarly for all leaders. However, articulators have a unique path to success in implementing a vision of good society. They are best able to achieve their vision of good society by making sure that the regime continues and remains strong. As shown in Table 6, this includes the interpretive task of encouraging continuing public belief in the regime and its ideas. More active articulators are generally less capable of ensuring the endurance of the regime and thus their achievements tend to last only for the shorter-term and tend to encourage opposition movements to build alternative social coalitions.

| | **Material** | **Interpretive** |
|---|---|---|
| **Good society** | Manage Regime to prolong it/institutionalise updated programme | Encourage continuing belief in the ideas of the regime |
| **Institutions** | Respect due process, encourage strength in all institutions of government | Encourage public confidence in government, society |
| **Citizens** | Respect citizens' rights | Build personal trust with the public |

Table 6. Normative Success for Leaders of Articulation.

Even tasks with an ethical basis are more difficult to achieve for articulators than for reconstructors, particularly in interpretive terms. A stronger opposition is more likely to hold articulators to account for any lapses of due process, of respecting citizens' rights, or other shortcomings. They also lack the advantages that reconstructive leaders gain as a result of restoring national confidence. This means that if they are not normative material successes, they are unlikely to be interpretive successes in normative terms.

## Historical Contextual Framework for Analysing Pre-emptive Leadership

*Personal success*

Table 7 represents personal success for pre-emptive leaders using the same criteria as the other leadership types. Pre-emptive leaders' ability to achieve personal success is, however, particularly restrained. As pre-emptive leaders oppose the regime while it is resilient, they face strong opposition from regime-defenders. This typically makes gaining material successes such as major legislative achievements difficult and means that there is strong, largely coherent, opposition seeking to prevent pre-emptive leaders from being credited with successes. This is more problematic for presidents than for prime ministers, as in Congress opposition can pass and take credit for legislation in a way that is rarely, if ever, possible for parliamentary oppositions in nations like Australia and the UK. Pre-emptive prime ministers, like pre-emptive presidents, find presenting their achievements as successes difficult because strong oppositions argue against them.

| | Material | Interpretive |
|---|---|---|
| **Elections** | Results | |
| **Legislation passed** | Quantity, importance of legislation | Create perception that it is a success, and that it is the leader's success |
| **Popularity/Reputation** | | Polling, position in rankings studies |

Table 7. Personal Success for Pre-emptive Leaders.

*Partisan Regime Success*

As regime opponents, we should judge pre-emptive leaders on their ability to weaken the regime rather than strengthen it. Thus the criteria described in Table 8 are essentially the inverse of the criteria by which articulators are judged. The task of discrediting regime ideas is a difficult one, especially because of the strength of regime defenders. Regime ideas are most vulnerable when they appear to be ineffective, for example because of an economic downturn. Pre-emptive leaders should capitalise on such events as they take place. Like ideas, institutions are fairly resilient to attack unless there is an external event that discredits them. Moreover, institutions are the least vulnerable aspect of any regime and are the most likely to linger even after a subsequent reconstruction. There are opportunities for pre-emptive leaders to attack institutions by reducing their funding or capacity and we should look for these in our assessments of pre-emptive leaders.

| Attack the Axis of Partisan Cleavage | Majority Coalition | Institutionalisation |
|---|---|---|
| Discredit regime definition and ideas | Attack the social majority, build elements of a social alternative | Weaken regime institutions |
| Defeat opposition attempts to attack redefinition | Create a legislative majority/weaken opponents' majority | |

Table 8. Partisan Regime Success for Pre-emptive Leaders.

The most vulnerable aspect of regimes is their coalitions. Once these coalitions fragment ideas and institutions become more vulnerable to attack. Regime coalitions contain groups that disagree on certain issues and pre-emptive leaders can capitalise on this to weaken societal and legislative support for regimes. Pre-emptive leaders can implement policies that will appeal to segments of the regime coalition but antagonise other segments of it. Close critical analysis of the behaviour of the groups that form the coalition and their relationships with the leaders is the most likely way to achieve a thorough understanding of this aspect of pre-emptive leadership success.

*Normative Success*

The nature of pre-emptive leaders' political challenge makes is difficult for them to obtain normative success in each criterion shown in Table 9. If they attempt to implement their vision of good society, it is an inherently destructive task. Given the strong oppositions they face, their destructive efforts inevitably provoke strong opposition and pre-emptive leaders are more likely to be impeded in their efforts than other types of leaders. This encourages some pre-emptive leaders to engage in ethically questionable political conduct to overcome these obstructions. Any inclinations towards

such behaviour are only compounded by oppositions' greater readiness to hold pre-emptive leaders to account than they do other types of leader. Therefore pre-emptive leaders are less likely to enjoy interpretive success in the normative realm than all other leadership types, perhaps with the exception of disjunctive leaders. Naturally, pre-emptive leaders do not have to exercise the moderation of Dwight Eisenhower or else fall from grace in the manner of Richard Nixon. There is significant ground between these two examples for relative normative success.

| | **Material** | **Interpretive** |
|---|---|---|
| **Good society** | Defeat regime or at least weaken it | Encourage public rejection of the ideas of the regime |
| **Institutions** | Respect due process, encourage strength in all institutions of government | Encourage public confidence in government, society |
| **Citizens** | Respect citizens' rights | Encourage citizens' participation, especially elements that have been excluded |

Table 9. Normative Success for Pre-emptive Leaders.

Part of pre-emptive leaders' normative task is more obviously positive in the short term than that which has already been discussed. As the bottom right box of Table 9 shows, pre-emptive leaders can re-engage groups and interests that have been largely excluded from politics under the existing regime. In this way, they play an important part in representative democracy. Furthermore, they have the capacity to question many of the existing methods and programmes of government that articulators would not question. Thus, pre-emptive leaders' actions can encourage regime defenders to improve the function of their policies.

## Historical Contextual Framework for Analysing Disjunctive Leadership

*Personal success*

Disjunctive leaders usually have poor reputations because they achieve little interpretive success. Not only do they face a rising opposition, but their supporters are divided and achieving anything that can gain the support of a stable coalition is difficult. Few other political elites are willing to credit either the leaders' actions as their own or their results as successes. Disjunctive leaders' inability to achieve in an interpretive sense reduces their authority further and makes it harder to achieve future material successes. Thus, their performance on all of the criteria identified in Table 10 is likely to be poor, but especially in the interpretive criteria on the right side.

| | **Material** | **Interpretive** |
|---|---|---|
| **Elections** | Results | |
| **Legislation passed** | Quantity, importance of legislation | Create perception that it is a success, and that it is the leader's success |
| **Popularity/Reputation** | | Polling, position in rankings studies |

Table 10. Personal Success for Disjunctive Leaders.

There are institutional differences between disjunctive prime ministers and presidents that alter the way we should understand their personal success. Prime ministers are more able to guarantee the passage of legislation and therefore more able to achieve in material terms. They can take credit for specific achievements, even if their leadership as a whole remains unlikely to be widely viewed as successful. The internal pressure on disjunctive prime ministers from within their parties is greater than that disjunctive presidents

face, principally because parties can remove struggling prime ministers.[9] Disjunctive prime ministers' existence then is likely to be tenuous and they are therefore highly constrained by their parliamentary parties.

*Partisan Regime Success*

Partisan regime success is unavailable to disjunctive leaders. The regime dies during their tenure and this creates societal disruption. Perceptions of failure cling to disjunctive leaders because they are forever associated with crises, as with Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression or Jim Callaghan and the Winter of Discontent. These leaders cannot be considered regime successes because their best chances of achieving their visions of good society are tied to the regime itself.

*Normative Success*

Disjunctive leaders cannot enact their vision of good society but they can smooth the process of reconstruction for the next leader by experimenting with new policy programmes and new government logics. Their experimentation allows reconstructive leaders to build on those programmes that alleviate the problems associated with the demise of a regime while discarding other ideas that do not work. It is easier to measure the quantity rather than the quality of experimentation but the usefulness of experimental policies to reconstructive successors can be a useful guide. Experimentation gives disjunctive leaders material but not interpretive success (see Table 11). To be interpreted as successful, these leaders need to actually solve complex problems, something achieved by very few political leaders (Skowronek 1997: 402, 2008: 96). Even leaders like Bob Hawke, Ronald Reagan, Margaret

[9] Although the process for removing prime ministers is becoming more complex in many Westminster systems as countries like the UK have embraced leader election systems that involve larger constituencies (see Le Duc 2001, Heppell 2008, 2010, Rafter 2003). Australia retains a system in which the parliamentary party alone can remove the leader.

Thatcher or Franklin Roosevelt often exacerbated national problems before they improved and the extent to which those leaders were themselves responsible for solving national problems is questionable.

| | Material | Interpretive |
|---|---|---|
| **Good society** | Can't provide this but experimentation can help reinvigorate society | Must solve problems |
| **Institutions** | Respect due process, encourage strength in all institutions of government | Encourage public confidence in government, society |
| **Citizens** | Respect citizens' rights | |

Table 11. Normative Success for Disjunctive Leaders.

Disjunctive leaders are almost incapable of having interpretive success. This leads to an impression that they are ineffective and lack authenticity and principle. As their opposition is strong, disjunctive leaders are held to account. Even worse for them, their divided supporters are not entirely committed to defending them. Disjunctive leaders tend to fail in terms of encouraging trust in the institutions of government. Their leadership appears to prove the failure of the institutions of government. We should judge favourably those leaders who are not major failures on this task, rather than expecting them to have a positive effect on perceptions of the institutions of government. Again, this should be less of a problem for disjunctive prime ministers than for disjunctive presidents as the former are more capable of making the institutions work for them.

**Broader implications for political leadership**

Conceptualising successful political leadership according to historical context has many broader implications for the way we understand political leadership. Once we understand political leaders in a way that acknowledges their opportunities, it is apparent that many more leaders should be considered successful than typically is the case. Many constrained leaders like Jimmy Carter or Australia's John Gorton deserve closer inspection. Such leaders frequently performed better than their reputations suggest. This has important implications for the public understandings of politics. Cynicism about political leaders is healthy, but an assumption that all but a few were largely incompetent is less so. An understanding that politicians and political leaders generally do their jobs well could increase public trust in government and participation in politics. Furthermore, the better our understanding of the different requirements of political leadership in different situations, the better informed political leaders can be, and the more likely that they perform well and encourage positive political outcomes.

This conception of political leadership also places a premium on Hargrove's 'discernment', the skill of understanding one's place in historical context (1998). It also suggests that when we examine political leadership skills, we should take account of how well they relate to the context itself, as in the "skill in context" conception of political leadership (Bell, Hargrove and Theakston 1999, Hargrove and Owens 2003). Furthermore, we should tailor our understanding of leadership skills in accordance with the requirements of the historical contextual frameworks.

A further important lesson for scholars of political leadership is that leaders' actions alter the historical context in ways that affect those leaders but that more acutely affect their successors. If pre-emptive leaders effectively weaken

regime coalitions, the articulators who succeed them have greater difficulty in utilising the regime. As Crockett argues, the mere existence of pre-emptive leaders may encourage the articulators who succeed them to act more aggressively to compensate for years of lost opportunity (2012: 900). In a more complex example, the relative success of reconstructive leaders can affect leaders for the entire course of the regime. For example, Reagan's lesser success in creating his regime, particularly in removing institutions and reducing government spending, created a regime with an inconsistent logic. The reduction of taxes without comparable reduction of spending means that the Reagan regime has been responsible for many of the greatest difficulties that have haunted successors. George H. W. Bush's decision to renege on his promise and agree to Congress' tax increases angered many in his party and damaged his re-election chances. Barack Obama has repeatedly encountered fervent Republican Congressional opposition over the increase of the federal debt limit, a problem abetted by regime adherents in maintaining the regime despite the widening gap between spending and revenue.

Polsky argues that regimes are variable and that some are stronger, or easier to work with, than others (2012: 71). Some circumstances make reconstructions easier to complete than others. The Great Depression and World War II were enormous events that helped Curtin justify his reconstruction, whereas it was harder for Bob Hawke and other leaders of the 1970s and 1980s to use the protracted but less severe economic downturn of that time to justify reconstructions. However, this thesis argues that the success or failure of reconstructive leaders is crucial to the variability of regimes. The importance of political leaders in the success of regimes is underlined by Hawke's particular success among Australian reconstructive leaders, as discussed in the third article of the thesis.

The variations in the way Skowronek's political time operates in different institutional settings also create some interesting implications for prime ministers in particular. The first article of this thesis found that in Australia, prime ministers can change from one leadership type to another as political time develops throughout long tenures. This is also likely to happen in the US among longer serving presidents. The potential for leaders to change from one type to another suggests that they must be judged by different criteria at different times of their leadership. However, it is exceedingly difficult for leaders to succeed in a different, second type of leadership. Malcolm Fraser had advocated orthodox economic policies for many years. He could not simply abandon his public political past. Fraser considered the prospect of experimenting with a shift in the political logic towards monetarist ideas but ultimately remained committed to articulating the old, Keynesian economic logic. This meant that he could not succeed either in terms of retaining the regime, as is important to articulators, or in terms of experimenting with new reconstructive policies, as is important to disjunctive leaders.

This thesis has emphasised that political leaders are in a constant contest with opponents and that this contest is integral to leaders' success. Furthermore, oppositions and government leaders often have complex relationships in which oppositions can help government leaders to succeed. This may be unwitting, as oppositions' failures encourage governments' successes, or it may be intentional, as oppositions suggest improvements to policies. Their pressure can encourage government leaders to maintain higher standards than they might otherwise.

**Broader implications for politics**

The thesis has highlighted a decidedly partisan and divisive form of politics. In particular, the contention that pre-emptive leaders should seek to attack the

regime that prevents them from instituting their vision of good society, encourages partisanship. This partisanship is enhanced by many of the tasks within the framework, where "defeating" opposition alternatives is emphasised. Partisanship is necessary to the regime structure that is so central to this thesis. It is hard to imagine a reconstruction taking place without some level of ideology driving it. A compromise between differing major parties is unlikely to have the same creative energy that is required to restore faith in national government in these countries. However, partisanship holds negative connotations in much political commentary, as parliamentary or congressional disputes are often perpetuated for political purposes, rather than to directly benefit the nation. The thesis should not be read as privileging majoritarianism or partisan politics over consensus and compromise, but it does contain a limited defence of the former political style in observing that it certainly can be effective and can produce results that are good for society.

The greatest benefit of partisan and majoritarian politics is its creativity. The more compromise is integral to politics, the less creative and more incremental change becomes (Self 2010: 67-69). This means that the political system is in a better position to recover from downturns and crises, as seen in various reconstructions. It may also mean that the political system is more likely to experience those downturns in the first place. Excessive ideological tendencies in one direction or another, for example free market tendencies or tendencies towards heavy regulation, are often blamed for crises. However, no political system has shown itself impervious to such problems (see McCloskey 2011: 183), and there is no reason to think that the greater incrementalism of consensus democracies makes these necessarily less prone to crises. In fact, nations that have performed better through the Global Financial Crisis have come from diverse nations with a variety of political systems, such as Australia, China, India, Canada and Chile.

Another implication of this thesis for the broader political system is the centrality and importance of the president or the prime minister to national politics. The thesis ties leadership in historical context to a wide range of political outcomes. This is not because there is an assumption that presidents or prime ministers have untrammelled power, or that they are the only important actors in national politics. Rather they are the political actors with the greatest capacity to define the government's position with relation to the historical context and with the greatest capacity to alter the historical context itself. Undoubtedly, presidents and prime ministers must and should share the tasks of national government with other political and governmental actors, but they have the greatest capacity to persuade and to create in national politics.

**Broader implications for political research**

The centrality of the political leader to this thesis means that it can be read as an argument for taking political leadership more seriously within the study of politics. Currently, there is no journal committed to the study of political leadership. Presidential Studies Quarterly approaches such a commitment although it concentrates almost exclusively on the presidency and not on other political leaders. The study of political leadership refers to most of the major questions of social science (Ahlquist and Levi 2011: 19). This combined with its importance to practical political outcomes suggests that there is good reason for political leadership to be central to the discipline.

The study of political leadership has been peripheral within political science in part because it is difficult to examine holistically with quantitative methods (Bowles 1999: 3-4). Quantitative researchers perennially struggle to find a sufficient number of comparable political leaders to attack the subject with statistical robustness. Given that executive political leaders are singular, there

are two traditional ways to make comparisons. Leaders within one political system can be historically assessed, by seeking to understand political leadership at different times and building limited generalisations that hold beyond the one specific leader (see Pierson 2004: 6). Leaders can also be subjected to cross national comparison (see for example Elgie 1995, Helms 2005, 2012: 657-658, Weller, Bakvis and Rhodes 1997).

This thesis has augmented both of these methods. The former method has been employed in a way that emphasises the cyclical, rather than linear, pattern defining historical context. Thus the generalisations that historical analysis of leadership can provide allow us to examine multiple leaders from multiple times, rather than treating each leader's historical context as entirely unique. The comparison of leaders of these nations need not be merely limited to discovering their differences; similarities of patterns of leadership are of equal importance in understanding political leadership (Caramani 2010).

Even theoretical contributions designed to explain politics in one institutional setting (Skowronek 1997, Nichols and Myers 2010), often observe elements that are fundamental to politics in democratic nations. This is unsurprising given that many of the greatest problems that political leaders face are intrinsic to democracy itself (Kane and Patapan 2012). We should therefore approach executive political leaders from different countries with the expectations that they possess many similarities as well as many important differences, rather than treating them as entirely different species.

**Conclusion**

Political leadership success cannot be studied as a phenomenon that is universally available and always identical. The demands and opportunities of political leadership vary greatly with leaders' historical contexts. In taking account of these differences as we examine and assess political leaders'

success, it becomes apparent that many more of our political leaders have been successful than is frequently supposed. It remains for us to refine and hone the framework of political leadership success created here by applying it to many more empirical situations, and to develop this perspective further as an approach to political leadership. The more understanding of success in political leadership is advanced, the better the quality of scholars' advice to political leaders will be. The greater understanding political leaders have of their roles and of their broader contexts, the better political leadership they will offer and the better democracy will function.

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